



Dance of Democracy

8 DAYS TO GO

BATTLEGROUND KERALA ▶ APR-10

THE TIMES OF INDIA | KERALA | WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2, 2014

Weather | With eight days to go for polls, candidates of LDF, UDF and BJP in Mavelikkara Lok Sabha segment are busy with the second round of campaigning. The LDF candidate Chengara Surendran started the second leg from Kuttanad on Tuesday, and the CPI national leader A B Bardhan took part in the election convention. Earlier, opposition leader V S Achuthanandan also campaigned for Surendran. LDF state leaders Kodiyeri Balakrishnan and K P Rajendran will also tour Mavelikkara in the coming days. Meanwhile, the UDF workers are looking forward to the visit of Rahul Gandhi, who is expected to campaign here on April 5. Chief minister Oommen Chandy, home minister Ramesh Chennithala and KPCC chief V M Sudheeran have already taken part in the public meetings organized for the electioneering of Kodikkunnil. The BJP candidate P Sudheer has also started his second round of constituency tour

Boiling Point | The failure to deliver promises, including the time bound execution of Kuttanad package, during the last election and his alleged link with solar scam accused Shalu Menon (who got recommended to the Central Board of Film Certification by Kodikkunnil) are the main campaign planks of the LDF. Meanwhile, the LDF is attacking the UDF, highlighting the political violence of the CPM and Achuthanandan's recent change of stance in TP case



Forecast | Though the situation is favourable to Kodikkunnil, it may change, as Chengara Surendran is a seasoned politician. LDF candidate who had contested against him was a new face. LDF feels that Kodikkunnil's failure to execute Kuttanad Package and his alleged link with Shalu Menon, will turn voters against him



Weather | With heavyweights of all parties campaigning in the constituency, the election fervor is reaching a crescendo in Ponnani. The presence of leaders like V M Sudheeran and A K Antony has pepped up the hitherto lukewarm ambience in the Congress camp. But the low turnout of people at campaign programmes in rural areas is a cause for concern in the UDF camp. The candidates of the major three fronts have already completed their first round of campaigning in coastal regions. LDF is trying to cash in on the drift within the UDF and dissident activities of Congress workers in the constituency. As a former congress person, LDF candidate V Abdurahiman is getting support from some congress workers for his campaign. E T Mohammed Basheer is concentrating on door-to-door campaigns

Boiling point | The allegations made by UDF that the election ticket allotted to Abdurahiman was on payment basis, is a major topic of discussion. The campaign of congress workers seeking votes for Abdurahiman and the statement of Aryadan Muhammed against E T Muhammed Basheer that the latter was an extremist are being given wide publicity by the LDF across the constituency



Forecast | The Indian Union Muslim League candidate is unlikely to repeat the big victory this time, as the LDF candidate has managed to win the support many Congress workers in the constituency. The presence of Abdurahiman may cause a dip in the UDF votes and the front is dependent on the IUML to win seats here

FIRST-TIME VOTER
I strongly believe in the system of democracy, and I think that my vote is my power to change the system. I've decided to vote for a person rather than a party. Our dream of a corruption-free India is not a probability but a possibility. The power is definitely in your hands. Use it
Tessa Sebastian | FASHION DESIGNER, KOCHI

RAMESH KANJILIMADHOM
IT PROFESSIONAL, KOCHI

Election is a carnival that happens once in five years. We need change, but I doubt if this election is going to bring one. We might get a new bottle, but it will certainly be filled with old wine. The circus is entertaining though, to see these politicians finally coming down to the earth to see us mortals.

ASHIK KALAM
FREELANCE WRITER, TVM
I don't have any political affiliation and I would go for a candidate who can understand the aspirations of the upwardly mobile youth, if there is a candidate I like, I would surely travel to my hometown to vote. Otherwise, I wouldn't bother

COMMON MAN

Poll action: Govt to hire 15,000 SPOs for security

They Will Be Selected From Ex-Servicemen And Former Police Officers

K P Sai Kiran | TNN

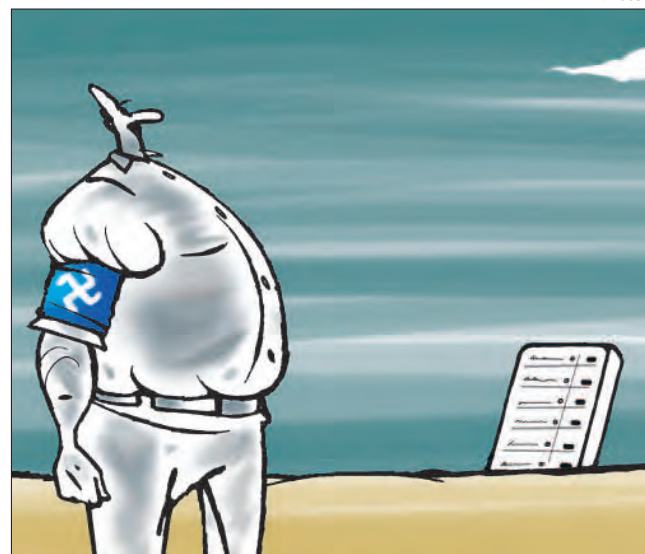
Thiruvananthapuram: For supporting the security personnel who will be on duty at around 21,420 polling stations in the state on the poll day, a battalion of 15,000 special police officers (SPOs) will be recruited by the state government. The number of SPOs is an all-time high as there is an acute shortage of police personnel.

The SPOs will be recruited from ex-servicemen and ex-police officials and deployed at polling booths on April 9 and 10.

In an order issued by the home department on March 20 (GO (RT) No. 912/2014/Home), the government has sanctioned the recruitment of the SPOs at Rs 1,000 per day for two days. The order says that "able-bodied, retired ex-servicemen who had retired not more than 5 years earlier only should be considered".

In addition, it also says that the preference should be given only for ex-servicemen and to ensure that they do not have any political leanings. "Though it may be impossible to clearly figure out whether the personnel being recruited are politically neutral, the special branch will do a background check of those being taken for election duty," top police sources said.

The services of SPOs will be used only outside polling stations. "They will be deployed only for simple law and order duties or bandobast arrange-



IT IS LEARNT THAT 17 COMPANIES WILL BE DEPLOYED IN AREAS THAT COME UNDER THE KANNUR POLICE RANGE THAT INCLUDES KASARAGOD, KANNUR, WAYANAD, KOZHIKODE RURAL AND KOZHIKODE CITY

ments outside polling stations," the order says. It has also specified not to associate political functionaries directly or indirectly in the selection process of SPOs.

The recruitment of SPOs is being made under the Section 98 of the Kerala Police Act which empowers district police chiefs to appoint temporarily

any able-bodied and willing person of good character between the age of 18 and 60 years as a SPO for the purpose of assisting the police in maintaining law and order.

The government's order has come on the basis of the report of the state police chief that the total police force that can be mobilised for the election duty is

inadequate for the purpose even if forces from neighbouring states are deployed for duty. According to police sources, the shortage is very high in northern Malabar, especially in Kannur, where there are a large number of sensitive booths.

Meanwhile, the Central paramilitary forces have started reaching the state in batches and the movement will be completed in another couple of days. "We are expecting 40 companies of paramilitary forces, including 14 companies of Karnataka police and five companies from Tamil Nadu police," sources said.

On Monday, three platoons of Karnataka police force, comprising 99 personnel and six officers, arrived here as deputed by the Election Commission (EC) to maintain vigil at sensitive booths in Guruvayur. The special force conducted route marches at Pavaratty and Brahmakulam.

It is learnt that 17 companies will be deployed in areas that come under the Kannur police range that includes Kasaragod, Kannur, Wayanad, Kozhikode rural and Kozhikode city. Out of this, six companies will be deployed in Kannur district alone. While five companies each will be deployed in Kasaragod and Kozhikode rural, one company will be deployed in Wayanad. At the same time, the state has already sent 12 companies to Karnataka and three to Lakshadweep.

Oommen Chandy adds new spin to Kasturi report

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Thiruvananthapuram: Chief minister Oommen Chandy has given a new twist to Kasturirangan panel controversy with the hope of turning the electoral fortunes of the UDF in the Lok Sabha poll.

Chandy made it clear that the recent notification on Kasturi report was issued following the collective effort of Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and A K Antony. But "to get the final notification in favour of Kerala, there is need for UDF candidates to get elected to the Lok Sabha", Chandy claimed on Tuesday.

"There is a need for getting the final notification in our favour. Only then will the fight be complete. For this, we need to elect representatives who can fight for the state. More than that, we need to have a government at the Centre who listens to the needs of Kerala," said Chandy.

In a detailed statement released to the media, Chandy has given full credit for releasing the draft notification to AICC president Sonia Gandhi, vice president Rahul Gandhi and Union defence minister A K Antony. "The draft notification was released exclusively for Kerala. However, there was an attempt by the opposition parties to make it an issue. Hence the notification had to go to the Election Commission for clearance," said Chandy.

He blamed the Left parties for creating several hurdles to



CM Oommen Chandy during an election campaign at Kizhakkambalam on Tuesday evening

prevent the release of the draft notification. They wanted to put government in a fix. Then the High Range Protection Council decided to join hands with the Left parties in the election. Hence, their intentions became clear, Chandy added.

"When it was realised that the recommendations had some adverse effects on farmers, the government had tried its best to protect their interests. However, the Left was trying to exploit the situation by calling a hartal and boycotting discussions the government had initiated. But the government could succeed in the raising our concerns and in getting the draft notification released," said Chandy.

Chandy also pointed out that the BJP and V S Achuthanandan favoured Gadgil panel report which is more harmful than Kasturirangan panel report.

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12 INJURED IN CPM-BJP CLASH

Thrissur: Twelve people, including three women, were injured when BJP workers attacked CPM branch secretary T Manikandan at his home near Kallur at 1.45 am on Tuesday. Police took 33 BJP workers into custody. A company of police is camping in the area. Meanwhile, both CPM and BJP observed a dawn-to-dusk hartal in Thrissur panchayat after the incident. Police said the attack was a retaliation of sorts since CPM workers had reportedly attacked a BJP worker a couple of days ago at Plavin Kunnu. Manikandan, his father Vasu, brother Jayadevan, sisters-in-law Nisha and Neethu, neighbours Pallimakkil Vishnu, Chungan George and Puthan Veetil Joby have been admitted to the government hospital in Puthukkad. Others who were injured - BJP workers Raghunath Karipperi, Kottikkal Dinesh Babu, Surendran and his wife Shobhana - have been admitted to the district hospital. Three vehicles and two houses were also damaged in the incident. TNN

PIC & CHOOSE AGE-PROOF SOLIDARITY

FULL SUPPORT: Senior CPI leader A B Bardhan greets Karikode Omana while campaigning for M A Baby in Kollam. Omana is always spotted wearing a red sari printed with sickle and paddy symbol

ON CAMPAIGN TRAIL

Chalaky contest heading for a photo finish

M K Sunil Kumar | TNN

Kochi: Despite the blistering summer heat, candidates of all three fronts continued their campaign activities in Chalaky. While LDF's independent candidate Innocent sought votes to convey their issues in Parliament, UDF's P C Chacko wanted their support for UPA-III at the Centre. BJP's Gopalakrishnan toured every nook and corner of the constituency seeking votes for Narendra Modi.

Innocent's entourage visited Annamanada panchayat in Kodungallur, a panchayat that gave a vote margin of more than 3,000 to UDF candidates during last assembly and Lok Sabha elections. After the reception at Vennoor, Vennoopadam and Annamanada, Innocent addressed a crowd of 200-odd people, including women and kids, at Pulickakadavu.

The crowd gifted him a mud pot filled with 'Kanikkonna' and wished him luck. He started his speech by referring to some of his memorable characters, but reminded them that he was standing before them as an LDF-backed candidate. The actor also greeted people who were standing on either side of the road and threw Kanikkonna flowers to children and elderly, much to their delight. Innocent didn't touch any serious political issue. Instead, the local leader in the pilot vehicle briefed the political scenario in the country and state in a nutshell.

Innocent summed up how he would be able to serve them properly as an MP. "Let me leave for the time being. But, I will return," he said. At Meladoor, he also met his old classmate Vijayan Moolampilly.

On the other hand, Chacko met voters to ensure that the UDF votes are intact. Chacko started the day's campaign from Thamippuzha in Perumbavoor and toured Okkal, Koovappady and Vengola panchayats. Chacko's campaign was more formal and better organized. A host of UDF leaders were present to support him. There were apprehensions that Chacko would be facing oppositions from a section of his own party as he switched over to Chalaky from Thrissur.

In his short speech, Chacko spoke about a secular government that would soon assume power at the Centre. "It is not drama, cinema or any entertainment of sorts. It's a do-or-die battle. India shouldn't become a country like Bangladesh or Pakistan. India should continue as a democracy forever. That's why I seek your votes," he said.

Chacko also used video conferencing to address UDF workers in different parts of the constituency. From the UDF election committee office at Perumbavoor, Chacko spoke to the front's workers at Angamaly, Chalaky, Kizhakkambalam and Kodungallur. To a query from a UDF worker at the studio in Kodungallur on whether the UPA III would come to power, he replied that UPA-III will come to power under the leadership of Rahul Gandhi.

BJP's Gopalakrishnan sought support for his leader Narendra Modi so that BJP could form a government this year. Criticizing the Congress for corruption and mismanagement, he said that it is time for 'the lotus' to make a difference, while branding the LDF and UDF as both sides of the same coin.