



City plagued with civic issues as elections near

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CHENNAI: Nearly 150 voters in Chennai North, Chennai South and Chennai Central constituencies were chosen at random...

Bad roads, lack of street lights and environmental neglect were some of the reasons why voters in Chennai North, especially Kaladipet and Tondiarpet were not happy with the AIADMK Government in Tamil Nadu...

“Although, there are CCTV cameras around the area, the road lights do not work in the nights, proving unsafe for women,” said Arun Prasad, a resident of Tondiarpet and an IT employee.

Fishermen in Ennore said they faced complete neglect by the ruling Government and all the Central Government projects were against the environment.

“The thermal power and petrochemical industries continue to pollute the river and the Government has not done anything yet,” said Sasikumar, a fisherman in Kaatukuppam, a village in Ennore.

“The Central Government project, Sagarmala, which aims to expand the Kamarajar port also poses a huge threat to the coastal environment,” he said.

The lack of public buses was another issue.

“The government must put a restriction to the growing number of share autos in the area. The buses have been reduced and share autos charge a lot to go to nearby places,” says P. Mallikarjunan, a resident of Washermenpet.

In Chennai South, 22 people responded that drainage and mosquito menace were the main issues they were facing. People from Guindy, Alandur and Sholinganallur said they were facing traffic congestion during the rush hour and that the Government

was not doing anything to solve the problem.

In Chennai Central, the biggest problem was the poor water supply.

The survey sought the opinion of the voters on whether they would vote for their favourite party or whether their votes would depend on the candidate.

In Chennai South constituency, 66.1 percent of the respondents said that their vote would be based on



Poor water supply is one of the main issues in the city

the best candidate irrespective of the party he/she belonged to, whereas 26.8 percent said they would stand firmly with their favourite party. Apart from these, a minority of 7.1 percent said that they did not believe in elections and would vote for NOTA.

The numbers were similar for Chennai Central, with 61.5 percent saying they would vote for the best candidate and around 31 percent saying they would vote for their preferred party.

In Chennai North, 59 percent of the respondents said they would vote for their preferred party and not just the candidate.

When it came to issues faced by women, only 1.8 percent of the respondents in Chennai South found the constituency to be safe for women and 14.3 percent of the respondents cited sexual harassment as their single biggest issue.

“My co-workers and I regularly

face sexual harassment of a verbal nature, while coming back from work”, said Latha M, an IT professional staying in Ekkattuthangal.

Crimes like chain snatching have been on the rise and 14.3 percent of the respondents said this was the biggest problem women faced currently. As much as 17.9 percent said that the lack of proper regulations in TASMAR led to an

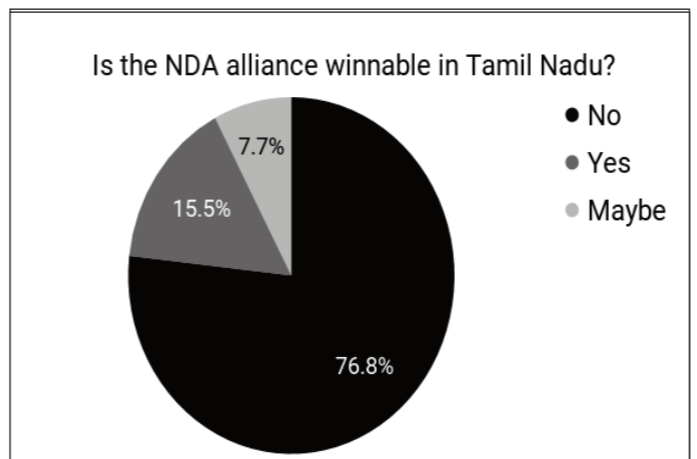
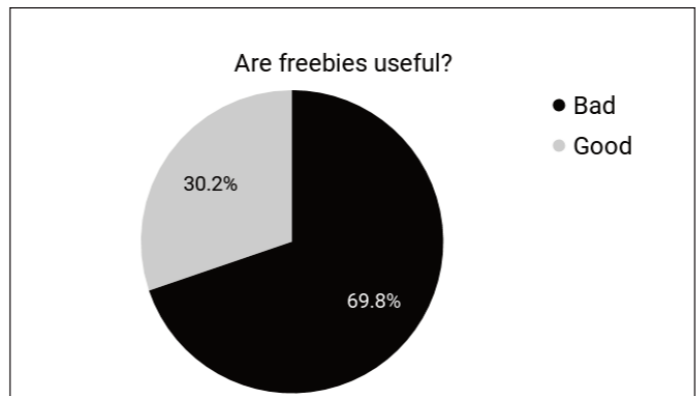
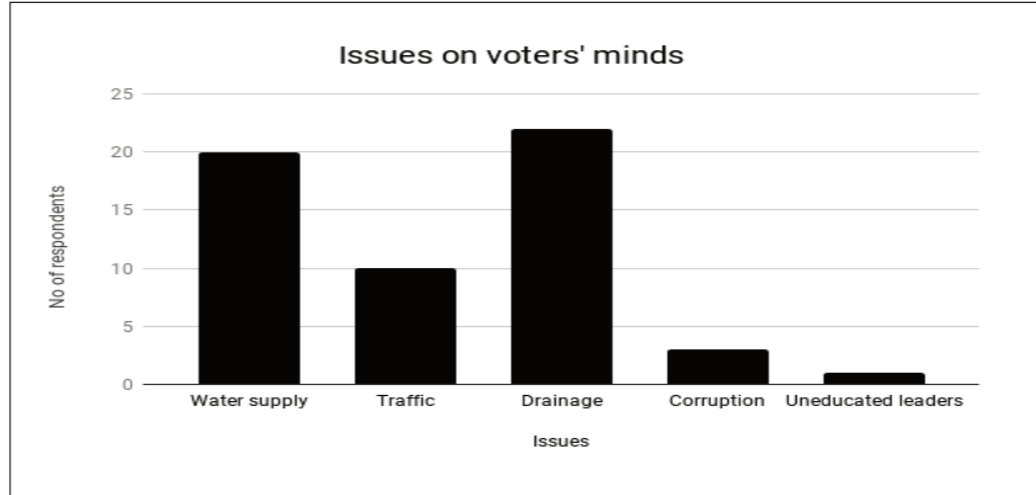
unsafe environment. Most of the voters opposed the idea of film stars entering the fray.

In Chennai South, 58.9 percent of the respondents were against the idea of film stars entering mainstream politics. However, 33.9 percent welcomed this move and some people said that actors turned politicians like Kamal Hassan could bring a change to the system.

In Chennai Central, a whopping 81 percent of the people surveyed were against the idea of film stars in politics.

Demonetization and GST were the other two biggest factors that caused angst among people.

“It has been three years since demonetization, we still have not recovered to normal business,” said S. Vanmani, a vegetable market vendor in Washermenpet.



KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE MANIFESTOS

Summary of key takeaways for DMK and AIADMK, including Agriculture (separate union budget, Cauvery delta protection), Education (getting back education in the state, bringing education from concurrent list), and Loan Waivers (waiving all loans for farmers and students).

KEY CLASHES: Chennai Central: DMK vs PMK; Chennai North: DMK vs DMDK; Chennai South: DMK vs AIADMK.

THE NUMBERS GAME: Chennai North, Chennai South, and Chennai Central election results from 1999 to 2014, including year, winner, party, and vote percent.

DMK promises loan waiver

Election manifesto focuses on the State’s rights, vows to make Tamil official in Central Institutions

PRIYANKA KAUL

CHENNAI: Waiver of farm loans and education loans taken by students belonging to Backward Classes (BC), Most Backward Classes (MBC) and SC/ST communities was among the promises made by the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) in its 100-point manifesto released ahead of the Lok Sabha 2019 elections here on March 19.

The state-owned banks will incur a cost of no less than Rs 8,000 crores spread across 4 lakh accounts if the education loans are waived. More than half of all the education loans are in South India, Tamil Nadu being at the forefront, while Kerala comes next, according to a report by Indian Bank’s Association.

Released by the party president M K Stalin, the 76-page manifesto also promised to make Tamil an official language in central government offices in Tamil Nadu and a court language in the Madras High Court.

Another major point was the abolition of National Eligibility En-

trance Test (NEET), currently used for admission to medical colleges. “(NEET) is against the interest of the poor, rural and oppressed class, across the country. In the interest of social justice, DMK will strive for its abolition,” Stalin said.



M.K.Stalin | THE HINDU

The party also promised to create more jobs and fill up existing vacancies in all government departments and implement pension schemes for State government employees. As part of corporate social responsibility, the private sector would be urged reserve jobs for the deprived sections.

The party has said that it would

compensate the families of over “100 people” who it said “died while waiting in long queues to exchange demonetized notes.”

“On November 8, 2016, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, without consulting Reserve Bank of India or renowned economists announced the demonetization of Rs 500 and Rs 1,000 currencies which came as a rude shock to the people of India. Families of the victims who lost their lives while standing in the bank queue for changing demonetized notes will be compensated equally,” the party president said. However, no cap on the compensation was mentioned.

The party said all Sri Lankan refugees living under camps as per the 1964 Indo-Sri Lankan agreement will be given citizenship and a full-fledged statehood for Puducherry.

The DMK said it would make efforts to release the seven convicts in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case and stop the Salem eight-lane highway project and instead widening the existing routes, etc. were among the other assurances.

AIADMK aims at poverty relief

Promises farm loan waiver, and NEET exemption for State

NOEL ADRIAN CORERA

CHENNAI: The All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) has promised the implementation of the “Ammu National Poverty Eradication Initiative (ANPEI), among other measures, in its election manifesto. Under this new initiative Rs. 1500 a month will be distributed to people living below the poverty line, destitute women, labourers and widows without income among others.

Speaking at a press conference, Chief Minister K Palaniswamy, along with other senior leaders, announced the features of the manifesto. The manifesto promised the people that AIADMK would urge the Centre to shift the ‘education’ portfolio from the Concurrent list to the State List and to exempt students from Tamil Nadu from writing the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) for medical admissions.

The AIADMK will push for the waiver of the loans taken by small and medium farmers and poor students.

Pointing out the need to skill the youth, the party said it would ask the Centre to set up an organisation similar to the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority of the Philippines. The party will also urge the Centre to accept the Justice Sachar Committee recommendation to treat the converted Ss/STs, BCs and MBCs (to both Islam and Christianity) as “regular SC/ST/BC/MBC and provide them with all concessions now provided” for them.

Deputy CM O Paneerselvam said that the party would push for the release of seven convicts accused of killing Rajiv Gandhi. “AIADMK will urge the Government and the President of India to permit the Governor of

Tamil Nadu to release seven of the Tamil convicts as ordered by the Supreme Court and approved by the cabinet of Tamil Nadu government,” he said.

The AIADMK added that it would press the Centre to take up the issue of “massacre” of Tamils in Sri Lanka during the civil war, with the International Court of Justice at The Hague.

“Frequent increase in prices of petroleum products by oil marketing companies have been increasing the cost of all essential commodities, consumer goods and transport cost to all commuters, increasing the cost of living of consumers,” the manifesto said.

Reflecting Jayalalithaa’s firm stand on Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), the party said it would urge the Union government to give up the policy of allowing FDI in retail to protect small and tiny retailers.

To counter Tamil Nadu’s water crisis, the party will urge the Centre to link the Cauvery and the Godavari, and divert this water to drought-hit areas. There is a scheme to boost ground water table as well. Other promises include the establishment of a national commission for fishermen.

The party also said that it would urge the Union government to implement Tamil as one of the official languages of India, and also impress upon it to declare the Cauvery delta as a protected agriculture zone.

The party will urge the Centre to accord full statehood to the Union Territory of Puducherry to fulfill the aspirations of people.

AIADMK leads the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry.

The NDA constituents in Tamil Nadu are Bharatiya Janata Party, Desiya Murpokka Dravida Kazhagam, Pattali Makkal Katchi, and others

Women candidates number shrink in TN

NIKITA SINGH

CHENNAI: In a state where women voters will outnumber men in the upcoming general elections, the number of women candidates has dwindled. Tamil Nadu’s prominent parties including the AIADMK, DMK and BJP only have one or two women on their candidates list.

The AIADMK under Jayalalithaa had won a record 37 seats with four women candidates in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, has only one woman candidate this time, Maragadam Kumaravel from Kancheepuram.

A senior leader of the party, C. Ponnaiyan, said that the scaling down of the number of women candidates would not affect the

party’s image or female vote bank. Dismissing the allegations of the party becoming more patriarchal after Jayalalithaa’s demise, he said, “The party’s male candidates are backed by a band of top women leaders of the party and they very much represent them. We are confident the women’s reservation bill will be passed in the next parliamentary session.”

DMK MP, TKS Elangovan said, “We have to field men to win against men. However, if exclusive constituencies are reserved for women candidates, DMK would have fielded more women candidates. It is a question of win-ability.”

The party has fielded two women candidates, M Karunanidhi’s daughter MK

Kanimozhi and late DMK MLA Thangapandian’s daughter Tamilachi Thangapandian.

Kanimozhi, who will be contesting her first Lok Sabha elections from Tuticorin this time, said “The need of the day is to ensure a constitutionally sanctioned legal change to pave the way for women representatives to enter legislative bodies. We live in a society described as patriarchal. There are barriers in women entering the workforce across sectors and inherent gender bias is a reason. DMK has consistently voiced support for the Women’s Reservation Bill”

While the Congress is yet to release its candidates list, the BJP has fielded its state president Tamilisai Soundararajan from

Tuticorin as its only woman candidate.

Vinoj P Selvam, BJP Youth Wing President, said, “Our youth wing’s national President and the

There are barriers to women entering the workforce across sectors and inherent gender bias is a reason. - MK Kanimozhi

Tamil Nadu state President are women. Over the years, women participation in the Tamil Nadu youth wing has also increased. BJP Tamil Nadu youth wing is rooting for the Women’s Reservation Bill.”

The issue of a lack of women representation in the lower house has intensified with Naveen Patnaik led Biju Janta Dal listing seven women candidates for the 21 Lok Sabha seats in Odisha and Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress listing 17 women candidates for the 42 Lok Sabha seats in West Bengal.

Out of a total 543 Lok Sabha seats, women candidates had secured 61 seats in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, against 59 seats secured by women candidates in 2009.

It remains to be seen if more women are allowed to join the fray with the last date for filing nominations being March 26 and the last date for withdrawing the nominations March 29.



