

## Andhra Pradesh council polls on March 22

Elections to 31 seats of the Andhra Pradesh legislative council chosen by legislative assembly members will be held March 22.

Since both the ruling Congress and the main opposition Telugu Desam Party (TDP) have fielded candidates more than they can win, the elections under MLAs quota have become inevitable.

A total of 32 candidates are in the fray for 31 seats. The results of the elections will be announced the same day.

The ruling Congress is likely to win 19 seats but it chose to field an additional candidate. The TDP, which is in a position to win four seats, has five candidates in the fray.

The Congress has left two seats for the Communist Party of India and one for Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen. The TDP is backing the sole nominee of its ally Communist Party of India-Marxist while the Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS) has fielded two candidates. TRS rebels have nominated one independent candidate.

While the ruling party is confident that second preference votes by its members would ensure victory of its 20th candidate, the TDP hopes that possible cross voting or lapses could help its additional candidate.

The Congress has 185 members in the 294-member state assembly. The party has the support of 28 other members including its allies and independents. The TDP has 45 members while TRS has 26.

The state legislative council is being revived after two decades but the TDP has said that it would again abolish the council if it returns to power after the 2009 elections.

The council will have 90 members. Elections to eight graduates' constituencies, eight teachers' constituencies, 28 local authorities' constituencies will be held March 17.

Elections to three local bodies constituencies were postponed on technical grounds. Governor Rameshwar Thakur will nominate the remaining 12 members to the House.

TDP founder and former chief minister N.T. Rama Rao had abolished the council in 1980s, saying it served no purpose and was only a platform to rehabilitate the politically unemployed.

The Congress, which favours a bicameral legislature, had promised to revive the council after the 2004 assembly elections. A bill to this effect was passed in parliament last year.

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