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BJP upsets Cong math, usurps JD(S) ground

Munirathna, Rajesh Gowda give saffron party win in RR Nagar, Sira bypolls

BENGALURU, DHNS



In a huge upset for the D K Shivakumar-led Congress, the BJP won the Sira and Rajarajeshwari Nagar Assembly byelections on Tuesday, unsettling calculations made by the grand old party that wanted to send a message to the BS Yediyurappa administration.

The results also showed a big loss of electoral ground for the H D Deve Gowda-led JD(S), which was unable to retain the votes it had polled in the previous 2018 Assembly elections in Sira and Rajarajeshwari Nagar.

These bypolls were widely seen as a litmus test for Shivakumar as he was leading the Congress into an election for the first time after taking over as the party's state president. While conceding defeat, Shivakumar himself expressed surprise over the results.

The victory is expected to cement Chief Minister Yediyurappa's authority and silence rumours of his removal from the top post. He will now have to tackle the pressure of expanding or reshuffling his Cabinet.

In Sira, BJP's debutant CM Rajesh Gowda defeated Con-

RR NAGAR	SIRA
	
Munirathna (BJP) 1,25,990	CM Rajesh Gowda (BJP) 76,564
H Kusuma (Cong) 67,877	T B Jayachandra (Cong) 63,150
Krishnamurthy (JD-S) 10,269	Ammajamma (JD-S) 36,783

BJP wins 3 of 4 Council seats

The ruling BJP on Tuesday won three of the four Legislative Council seats, increasing its strength in the upper house to 30, DHNS reports.

The result of the Karnataka South East Graduate constituency is

expected on Wednesday. With this, the BJP has become the single-largest party in the Council, followed by the Congress, which has 29 seats that includes the chairman. The JD(S) has 14 seats. Details on Page 5

gress veteran T B Jayachandra, a six-time MLA, and Ammajamma of the JD(S), giving the saffron party its first victory here in four decades. Gowda won by a margin of 13,414 votes, which neither the Congress nor JD(S) expected given the BJP's negligible presence here.

The saffron party had to build a base from scratch.

The BJP won bigger in Rajarajeshwari Nagar.

► Bypoll, Page 6
More reports, Page 5

BJP upsets Cong math, usurps...

BY POLL, FROM PAGE 1

Its candidate Munirathna, who was disqualified after switching loyalties from the Congress last year, won by a margin of 58,113 against Congress' debutant Kusuma Hanumantharayappa and JD(S) local clansman Krishnamurthy V.

Munirathna's hat-trick is attributed to his own cadre of people who worked for him and his do-gooder activities during the Covid-19 lockdown and campaigning. Both Sira and Rajarajeshwarinagar have sizable Vokkaliga voters, which should have worked against the BJP.

Shivakumar had tasked his brother Bangalore Rural MP

DK Suresh in Rajarajeshwarinagar -- they are both Vokkaligas -- and the party was counting on consolidation of the one-lakh-odd Vokkaliga votes that did not happen as expected, it seems.

In Sira, Jayachandra was Congress Legislature Party (CLP) leader Siddaramaiah's man. While Vokkaliga votes got split as candidates of all three parties belonged to this community, Sira had a large number of OBC voters that Siddaramaiah, a Kuruba, could not muster, it is said.

Plus, former prime minister Gowda's campaign blitz towards the fag end was not enough to retain the seat his party had won two years ago.