

High-stakes bypolls for Belgaum, Maski, Basavakalyan

BENGALURU, DHNS

The Election Commission on Tuesday fixed April 17 as the poll day for the Belgaum Lok Sabha and Maski and Basavakalyan Assembly constituencies, which promise to be high on voltage and stakes for the BJP and Congress.

The model code of conduct has come into force in Belagavi, Raichur and Bidar, where these seats are located.

The Belgaum contest will be the first Lok Sabha bypoll in Karnataka after the BJP's thumping victory in 2019.

The sensational sex scandal is likely to have some bearing on the Belgaum bypoll as the Congress is said to be considering fielding its working president Satish Jarkiholi, the brother of former minister Ramesh Jarkiholi, who is at the centre of the controversy.

The Belgaum seat was vacated following the death of Union Minister Suresh Angadi, necessitating the bypoll. Apparently, Angadi's daughter and Industries Minister Jagadish Shettar's daughter-in-law Shradha is in contention for the BJP ticket, along with MLC

Constituency	Male	Female	Others	First-time voters
Belgaum	9,10,151	9,01,433	58	24,462
Maski	1,01,301	1,05,040	13	2,678
Basavakalyan	1,24,841	1,14,628	4	3,408

Mahantesh Kavatagimath, a Lingayat, and Dr Girish Sonwalkar, a medical professional who is said to have RSS roots.

The Congress will aim to retain Maski, an ST reserve constituency, and Basavakalyan, which it had won in 2018.

The Maski bypoll was neces-

sitated due to the disqualification of Pratapgouda Patil. Patil, who was with Congress earlier, has been assured a ticket by CMBS Yediyurappa, it is said.

The Congress has managed to lure Basanagouda Turvihali, the BJP's 2018 defeated candidate from Maski and he is ex-

pected to get the ticket.

In Basavakalyan, where incumbent Congress MLA B Narayan Rao died of Covid-19, the BJP hopes to woo the Lingayat and Maratha communities. There are over a dozen aspirants for the ticket, including Mallikarjun Khuba. Congress may field Rao's wife Mallamma or MLC Vijay Singh.

"We will win all three seats," Home Minister Basavaraj Bommai said. KPCC working president Saleem Ahmed said the party was upbeat in Belgaum and that the sex scandal could work in their favour.

BYPOLL CALENDAR

Issue of notification:
March 23

Last date of nominations:
March 30

Scrutiny of nominations:
March 31

Last date for withdrawal of nominations: **April 3**

Polling: **April 17**

Counting of votes:
May 2