

Impressive turnout despite surge in Covid cases raises hopes of parties

Some Voters Protest Over Missing Names

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru/Belagavi: The good turnout in bypolls to Belagavi Lok Sabha seat and Basavakalyan and Maski assembly segments on Saturday has surprised political parties. They were reportedly anticipating a lukewarm response from voters, given the alarming rise in Covid-19 cases across the state.

While Belagavi and Basavakalyan saw moderate turnout, voters queued up in large numbers in Maski. This has sparked speculations as to which party could benefit from this.

"The administration by and large ensured voters adhered to the pandemic norms. Everyone was told to maintain distance and wear masks. All booths had hand sanitisers," said a poll official. Voting was extended by 2 hours from 7am to 7pm to help citizens exercise their franchise after taking Covid precautions. The last one hour was reserved for those who tested positive. Voting started on a moderate note in all the three seats in the morning and gathered momentum as the day progressed.

There were a few incidents of EVM glitches and complaints of missing names from the voters' list. In Turuvihal village, a group of people protested demanding permission to allow 500 people, whose names were allegedly deleted from the list, to vote.

Police resorted to mild caning at Halapura village in Maski to disperse people gathered within

IN FOCUS: BYELECTIONS IN PANDEMIC TIMES



Congress candidate Satish Jarkiholi after casting vote



SAFE DISTANCE: Women queue up to exercise their franchise in Belagavi on Saturday

Couple comes to vote after wedding

A couple, who turned up at a polling booth in Bijgarni village, Belagavi, in their wedding attire grabbed eyeballs. Sumit Ashtekar and his wife went to the booth directly from the marriage hall and cast their votes.



FIRST-TIME INKED: A young voter poses for a photograph at a selfie booth at Sakhi polling station



Mangala Angadi of BJP

Winning three seats a prestige issue for BSY

► Continued from page 1

Voting with strict adherence to Covid protocols in all constituencies was held between 7am and 7pm. The counting is on May 2.

The byelections to Belagavi and Basavakalyan constituencies were necessitated following the death of Union minister Suresh Angadi and MLA B Narayan Rao, respectively. Bypolls to Maski constituency

were due to the disqualification of MLA Prathapagouda, who shifted to BJP after winning on a Congress ticket in 2018.

There are 10 candidates in the fray in Belagavi and 12 in Basavakalyan with 8 in Maski.

The Congress, which won Basavakalyan and Maski in 2018, has tried to retain them by cornering the ruling BJP over lack of good administration, Covid-19 situation, issues related to reservation of differ-

ent communities and allegations of a sex scandal against former minister Ramesh Jarkiholi. The BJP is banking on development.

While it's a direct fight between BJP and Congress in Belagavi and Maski constituencies, JD(S) is locked in a three-cornered contest in Basavakalyan. Winning the three seats has become a prestige issue for chief minister BS Yeddyurappa.

100 metres from the booth.

People from Chikkatadasi village in Ramadurga taluk under Belagavi Lok Sabha seat boycotted voting as a mark of protest against the government's alleged failure

to shift them from the flood-prone area to a safer place. The efforts of officials to persuade them to vote went in vain.

The BJP candidate in Maski, who tested positive for Covid-19,

cast his vote by wearing a PPE kit. Ramesh Jarkiholi, who resigned as minister after his name cropped up in the recent sex-for-job scandal, exercised his franchise through postal ballot.

BJP suspends ex-MLA Khuba for six years

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: The BJP on Saturday suspended former MLA Mallikarjun Khuba, who contested the Basavakalyan byelection as an independent, from the party's primary membership for six years.

In a letter addressed to Khuba, Lingaraj Patil, president of the state unit's disciplinary committee, said the former has violated the party's discipline by contesting against the official candidate Sharanu Salagar.

Khuba did not relent despite senior functionaries, including deputy chief minister Laxman Savadri, home minister Basavaraj Bommai and housing minister V Somanna, urging him to withdraw from the race.

Khuba had represented the constituency twice after winning the 2004 and 2013 assembly elections as a JD(S) candidate. He joined the BJP and unsuccessfully contested the 2018 elections when B Narayana Rao of Congress won. He was one of the frontrunners among the 16 local aspirants for the party ticket for Basavakalyan byelection.

Upset over the party's decision to field Sharanu Salagar, a Lingayat from Kalaburagi, Khuba and his supporters had held a series of protests, dubbing him an outsider. Basavakalyan assembly which went to polls on Saturday witnessed a triangular contest between BJP, Congress and JD(S). While Congress fielded late Rao's wife Mallamma, Syed Yasrab Ali Quadri was the JD(S)' choice.