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ಇಲಾಖೆ / ವಿಷಯ: DEPARTMENT / SUBJECT: Other State Matters (Election)

ಪತ್ರಿಕೆಯ ಹೆಸರು : NAME OF THE NEWS PAPER : Deccan Herald

ದಿನಾಂಕ : DATE : 24/05/2019

AIADMK win in TN Assembly by-polls saves government



Members of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) celebrate in Chennai on Thursday. AFP

ETB Sivapriyan ^{D.H.}
^{24/5/19}
CHENNAI, DHNS: Chief Minister Edappadi K Palaniswami on Thursday managed to save his fragile government as the ruling AIADMK was leading or had won in 9 Assembly seats out of 22 constituencies that went to by-polls.

With this, the ruling AIADMK's strength in the 234-member Tamil Nadu Assembly has gone up to 123, which is five seats more than the magic number of 118 needed for a majority.

The DMK won or was leading in 13 seats at the time of writing, which would take its tally to 101 and the alliance's strength to 110. The AIADMK government has survived for now, but the case seeking disqualification of 11 MLAs, including deputy chief minister O Panneerselvam, for

voting against the Palaniswami government in February 2017 hangs like an albatross around the dispensation's neck.

Palaniswami's gamble of stitching together an alliance with PMK, which wields considerable influence in northern Tamil Nadu districts, paid rich dividends with the party winning in three constituencies in the region - Harur, Pappireddipatti and Sholingur. AIADMK winning in nine seats made the DMK's victory in Lok Sabha elections a little sour as the Opposition party's dream of toppling Palaniswami came crashing.

DMK's win

However, the DMK's win in 13 seats was also significant since 12 of them were won by the AIADMK in 2016 elections - the ruling party candidates had won many seats by over

10,000 votes. The by-polls were necessitated by the disqualification of 18 MLAs owing allegiance to TTV Dhinakaran, death of three MLAs, including MKarunanidhi, and resignation of a minister.

Rebel leader Dhinakaran's AMMK suffered a major setback as none of the disqualified MLAs made it this time. Dhinakaran is the lone independent MLA in the House.

The DMK was expecting to win more than 15 seats which could have placed the Edappadi administration in a precarious position and helped bring down the dispensation, forcing early polls on the state.

The AIADMK quickly claimed credit for the victory in the by-polls by thanking people for "reaffirming" that it is the only party that has the qualification to rule Tamil Nadu.