

Celebrations in Congress, TDP camps after by-poll victory

Celebrations broke out in the camps of Andhra Pradesh's ruling Congress and the main opposition Telugu Desam Party (TDP) Sunday after their impressive show in last week's by-elections.

While the Congress wrested one Lok Sabha and five assembly seats from the Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS), the TDP snatched victory in one Lok Sabha and four assembly constituencies. They also retained an assembly seat each, which fell vacant due to the death of the sitting legislators.

It was celebration time at the Gandhi Bhavan, the state Congress headquarters. Dancing in gay abandon, party activists burst firecrackers and distributed sweets. Similar scenes were witnessed at the NTR Trust Bhavan, the TDP headquarters.

While the Congress hailed the verdict as a reflection of the people's confidence in the government, the TDP was elated over regaining the lost ground in the backward Telangana region by winning one Lok Sabha and four assembly seats there.

A total of 18 assembly and four Lok Sabha seats went to by-polls Thursday.

The good show by the Congress took its tally to 191 seats in the 294-member assembly and further improved its Lok Sabha tally to 30 out of 42 Lok Sabha seats from the state. TDP, which lost power and could win only 45 seats in the 2004 state assembly elections, has now four legislators more. It also has six MPs from the state now.

'This is only the beginning for the 2009 elections. There is no doubt that we will come back to power,' said state Congress president D. Srinivas.

'The results are very encouraging given the fact that we contested 2004 elections in alliance with three other parties (TRS, CPI, CPI-M). This time we went alone. This reflects people's confidence in the government, the development works done by it during the last four years and its sincerity in addressing the Telangana issue,' he said.

Srinivas did not subscribe to the view that the results reflected people's unhappiness with sitting representatives. 'There is no anti-incumbency. If it were so, TDP would have bagged all the seats,' he said.

The Congress chief also disagreed there was no Telangana sentiment among people. 'We have been saying from the beginning that these elections are no referendum on the issue of Telangana,' he said.

'By voting for the Congress, people showed that they have confidence in the Congress as it alone can address the Telangana issue with all sincerity,' he added.

'We are committed to resolving the issue of Telangana. The issue is under the consideration of the central leadership and we will abide by their decision,' he added.

Srinivas alleged that TRS chief K. Chandrasekhara Rao unnecessarily used an emotional issue to impose by-elections. He felt that over-confidence led to TRS's defeat.

Meanwhile, TDP expressed satisfaction over the results and said it was a big blow to Chandrasekhara Rao.

TDP leaders said the results showed that people were unhappy with the Congress party's misrule and the large-scale corruption and had confidence in the main opposition party.

TDP parliamentary party leader K. Yerran Naidu was confident his party would return to power in the next year's polls.

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