

## Gadkari wins state council election for fourth term

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Maharashtra unit president Nitin Gadkari has retained his seat from the Nagpur graduates' constituency, being elected to the Maharashtra Legislative Council for the fourth time.

He defeated his nearest rival Baban Taywade by a margin of 23,925 votes. Taywade was supported by the state's ruling Congress-Nationalist Congress Party combine.

Gadkari, who was a former public works minister in Maharashtra, won the election on the basis of his first preference votes at the end of seventh round of the counting that concluded Thursday night.

He secured 52,761 votes of the 91,385 valid votes polled in Tuesday's election. Taywade secured 28,836 votes, while Bahujan Samaj Party's Pradip Padole could muster 9,444 votes. Seven other candidates could secure only a total of 316 votes.

The Nagpur graduates' constituency, spread over the revenue division's six districts - Nagpur, Bhandara, Gondia, Wardha, Chandrapur and Gadchiroli - has favoured the BJP all through since 1978.

A tough fight was expected this time as Taywade, the principal of a local college and a veteran of Nagpur university politics, is a known figure in the area.

However, political analysts say the absence in the election campaign of legislators and leaders of the ruling parties - barring Chief Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh - led to Taywade's dismal performance.

On the other hand, the BJP managed to secure support from the Shiv Sena and three leaders of Republican Party of India factions in favour of Gadkari - former MP Jogendra Kawade, former Maharashtra minister Sulekha Kumbhare and former legislator Upendra Shende.

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