

## 'Rank-holders' fail to get party tickets i Karnataka

Two top 'rank-holders' of a novel eligibility test held to select candidates for the Sep 28 civic polls in Mysore have 'failed' to secure tickets from the Congress party, and one of them may enter the fray as an independent.

'I am still trying to get the B-form (official letter from the party) from the Congress as that can be submitted before the expiry of withdrawal time on Sep 20,' said J.N. Lakshmana, who topped the 'eligibility test' held Sep 9 by a social organisation.

Lakshmana, a post-graduate in History and a freelance journalist, filed his papers in Mysore just before 3 p.m. Monday, the closing time for nominations.

'I am discussing with my family, friends and supporters whether to contest as an independent if the Congress does not back me. I will take a decision on Sep 20,' he said.

In the Common Eligibility Test, aspirants had to answer objective-type questions, write a 100-word piece on the problems of Mysore, and fill in the blanks with appropriate words. Of the 80 odd people who wrote the test, only one flunked.

S. Rekha, a Commerce and Law graduate who came second in the test, however, has chosen not to enter the fray as she failed to get the Congress ticket.

'I am disappointed,' Rekha told IANS over phone from Mysore. Her businessman brother S. Rajesh said he had met local Congress leaders several times after Rekha came second in the test to seek party ticket for her.

'They promised but the list for the seat Rakha wanted to contest from had a different name,' he said.

Rajesh said they do not have any plans to field Rekha as an independent as they were not in a position to meet the election expenses.

Naseema Khan, a middle-aged Commerce graduate and a housewife, was lucky, though. She came ninth in the test. and got a ticket from Janata Dal (Secular) party.

'I am extremely happy and have filed the nomination,' an excited Naseema said.

On her chances of winning the elections, Naseema and her relatives said they would 'campaign vigorously to woo the voters'. We hope for the best'.

The Association of Concerned and Informed Citizens of Mysore (ACICM), an NGO which conducted the test, said it expects a majority of the around 80 persons who took the test to contest the poll as independents.

'I can give the exact figures only on Tuesday as today (Monday) is the last day for filing papers. But I expect 90 percent of those who passed the test to be in the fray,' K. Lakshmana said from Mysore.

The ACICM has promised to help these candidates with posters, banners and pamphlets for

electioneering.

The Mysore City Corporation is one of 208 urban local bodies going to polls Sep 28. Over 9.3 million voters will elect their representatives to the 4,998 wards in the urban civic bodies, according to the state Election Commission.

Over 10,000 polling stations are being set up for election. The poll commission has classified 3,670 stations as sensitive and 3,979 hypersensitive.

According to a spokesperson of the Election Commission, 10,163 presiding officers and 50,815 polling officers will conduct the elections.

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