

H.D. KUMARASWAMY INTERVIEW

## 'Bypoll outcome paves the way for an era of coalition governance'

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**Chief Minister says this proves that coming together of secular and democratic forces will offer positive results; he is hopeful of an alliance across the country**

The outcome of the byelections for two Assembly and three Lok Sabha constituencies — with the Congress and Janata Dal (Secular) consensus candidates winning four of the five seats — has left Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy confident about the future of the coalition government and hopeful of an alliance of secular and democratic forces across the country. Excerpts from an interview.

**On the Lok Sabha polls:**

With only six months left for the general elections, it is not difficult to sustain the momentum. The outcome of the byelections sends a strong message to the Opposition BJP that people have endorsed the coming together of the JD(S) and the Congress in the greater interest of protecting secular and democratic values. The vote share shows that people have decided to defeat divisive and communal forces.

**Do you think the results will stop the BJP from making efforts to bring down the government?**

The BJP will not stop its attempts. In fact, I expect it will further intensify the efforts at poaching our MLAs. They are convinced that they will lose many constituencies if this coalition continues till the Lok Sabha elections. So, they will leave no stone unturned, but they will fail. They will understand the futility of their exercise only after biting the dust in the 2019 elections.

**Have you set the ball rolling on two important processes – Cabinet expansion and talks with the Congress on seat sharing?**

Of course, the process of Cabinet expansion, filling the posts of chairperson of boards and corporations, and sharing of seats for the Lok Sabha elections will gain momentum now. The outcome of the bypolls has proved the fact that coming together of secular and democratic forces will offer positive results. Leaders of both the Congress and the JD(S) have an open mind on sharing of power and seats as they have understood the benefits of joining hands against divisive forces. The process of seat sharing has already commenced and there will be no room for discontentment and confusion. Leaders of both the parties believe in give-and-take policy and that will yield positive results.

**The Congress' efforts at an alliance have not been successful in States such as Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, where BSP supremo Mayawati has distanced herself. Do you think that will change?**

I am confident of Ms. Mayawati changing her stand, as a coalition of anti-BJP forces in Karnataka has offered positive results. Political parties which were watching the developments in Karnataka have understood that joining hands against the BJP is workable. Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh N. Chandrababu Naidu will be visiting Karnataka to discuss with our party national president H.D. Deve Gowda the prospects of a national-level political alliance. There is a possibility of both pre-poll and post-poll alliances. I think Ms. Mayawati will change her stand because of the present political scenario. I believe that the bypoll results will pave the way for an era of coalition governance, with regional parties coming together.

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**Family strong united fight:**

I think we lost Shivamogga despite making every effort possible, because of the some issues in strategy. The coalition decided the candidate at the last minute and there was no time to campaign. By that time the BJP had completed two rounds of campaign. People were in favour of the coalition, but we failed in reaping the benefit. Had we decided the candidate immediately after the announcement of the elections, we would have defeated the BJP with a margin of one lakh votes. But I am confident of relieving Shivamogga constituency from the clutches of the BJP in the Lok Sabha elections.

### **What worked right in Ballari?**

It is the joint efforts of Congress and JD(S) leaders and workers. Despite initial hiccups, coalition leaders put up a strong fight against money and muscle power and misinformation campaign of the BJP. Leaders of the Opposition bad-mouthed our leaders and lost the confidence of people. That resulted in the victory of the coalition candidate.

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