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30/3/68

Congress Party Wins Majority Seats In 17 Gujarat District Panchayats

By Our Correspondent

AHMEDABAD: If the recent Panchayat election results are an indication, the Congress in Gujarat has definitely gained popularity after the last general elections. It secured a clean sweep in all the 17 district panchayats, winning about 90 per cent of the seats.

The panchayat elections provided an opportunity for the Congress to assess and consolidate its strength after the humiliating performance in the last elections. It came to power with paper thin majority and there were anxious moments for the Chief Minister Mr. Hitendra Desai and his colleagues during August-September last when the

Swatantra had made a determined bid to topple the Congress Government in Gujarat.

The Congress was saved due to the compromising nature of the Chief Minister.

After the showdown in the State Assembly, the Congress party consolidated its position and concentrated its attention

on forthcoming panchayat elections. The Swatantra party on the other hand was frustrated and divided. Its many top leaders were vying each other for party leadership which ultimately resulted in the defection of deputy leader of the Swatantra Legislative Party Mr. Vadilal Lallubhai Mehta.

The panchayat elections indicate that it had succeeded in its motive. The Swatantra party which emerged as a largest single opposition party with sixty-five seats in the House of 168, could capture only 20 seats out of 344 seats in the district panchayats, whose results have come in so far.

The Congress and the Swatantra party had contested almost all seats but the victory of the Congress was sure right from the beginning when it captured 124 taluka panchayat seats uncontested.

Internal quarrels and frustration plus lack of organisational work at taluka and district level are some of the reasons for the Swatantra party's miserable and humiliating defeat. The Congress, had even consolidated its position in areas where it had lost all seats in last general elections. In Surendranagar and Sabarkantha districts, where Congress had lost all assembly seats and Lok Sabha seats, it won 13 and 16 out of the total 19 and 13 seats, respectively.

It was like winning "Lost Empire", said Chief Minister, Mr. Hitendra Desai while commenting on results of election. He said "this reminds me of the Congress glory of pre-independence days. This is a result of good administration and complete unity in the Congress organisation".

The election results showed how the Congress had consolidated itself after the general elections. The Chief Minister declared: this is a "death blow" to the Swatantra party in Gujarat.