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Karnataka elections: 5 reasons why Bengaluru matters

Despite abysmally low voter turnouts, Bengaluru remains crucial for any political party that wants to come to power in Karnataka. Here are five reasons why today's election results matter for the 'Silicon Valley of India'

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In a cliffhanger election, 26 is enough of a number to completely swing the balance of power. The city could very well have a decisive say on who gets to rule Karnataka. Photo: AP

Bengaluru: At 52.47% voter turnout in [Karnataka elections](#), many residents of “Silicon Valley of India” were not too mindful of its responsibilities in a democracy. Perhaps they have long known that the politicians who control their city, Bengaluru, will only be floundering in their job. In any case, the preferred rulers of Bengaluru will be known in the next few hours. Here’s a brief review of why Bengaluru matters in Karnataka election results:

1. Bengaluru has 28 of the total 224 seats in Karnataka, out of which the Congress won 13 seats against the BJP’s 12 in 2013 Karnataka elections. The winners traditionally swing between these two parties with a difference of few seats.

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This time around, election in two seats were cancelled at the last minute, one owing to the death of a candidate and the other owing to allegations of fake Voter IDs.

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2. Bengaluru’s contributions to Karnataka’s revenue receipts form almost 60% of the total income. The better governance of the city, undisturbed by volatile

politics, is crucial to deliver the high growth Karnataka requires in an age of tight federal competition among states to attract investment. Without better legislators, who have sound city plans and economic policies, Bengalureans would be missing on crucial years.

3. Bengaluru is tied to the idea of prestige and aspiration, as seen in the many labels it is known: “Silicon Valley of India”, the country’s most dynamic city, the startup capital, and so on.

In an age where more people are moving to cities from villages in search of prosperity, Bengaluru tops as the favourite destination city for internal migrants in India. It attracted more people, ranging from blue-collar workers to billionaire corporates, than any other Indian city in the last decade, forming a population of 10 million people, as per 2011 Census.

For sure, the region’s development tops in the priority of India’s aspirational class.

4. Who comes to power in Bengaluru matters to a lot of poor households as well. The city added more poor people to its fold than the entire state, when one notes the increase in the official number of slums from 473 in 2003 to 597 to 2013. They inhabit almost 8 lakh people, 8% of the city’s population now, according to municipal body Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike. Most of them live in pitiable conditions. More than 85,000 of such households openly defecate for lack of options—not a number that bodes well for a city that wants to be seen as a development tapestry.

5. Including the latest 2011 Census, almost all recent studies have shown Bengaluru’s social indicators nosediving. To mention some, it has lost 66% of its vegetation and 74% of its water bodies in less than 40 years, even as its built-up area grew by 584 per cent, according to recent studies by Indian Institute of Science.

As it happens, the depressing social indicators created a war of words during the campaign among the two major parties: the ruling Congress and its challenger Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The Congress president Rahul Gandhi was seen harping upon, among others, his ruling government’s mammoth redesign of urban roads under a project called TenderSURE, improved metro connectivity and kick-starting a suburban rail project.

BJP’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi has promised to create a roadmap for

Bengaluru in the very first cabinet meeting, if voted back to power, apart from assuring more than Rs2,500 crore for many of its development projects.

Thanks to the aggressive pitch by both leaders, the results for sure will be seen as a reflection of whether the current Congress government has brought about a change in the life of Bengalureans.