

The New Indian Express 19.10.2010

Women power all the way in Kochi Corporation

KOCHI: With 50 percent seats reserved for women, the local body elections will see a cluster of areas represented by women, as a group of seats from certain areas has fallen into the reserved category.

In West Kochi, Mundamveli (division number 22), Moolamkuzhi (24), Chullickal (25), Nazarath (26) and Amaravathy (28) are nearby seats contested by women, while nearby divisions of Edappally (37), Devankulangara (38), Karukapilly (39), Mamangalam (40) and Vennala (42) are represented by women. There are also Vyttila (49), Champakkara (50), Poonithura (51), Vyttila Janatha (52) and Ponnurunni (53), Girinagar (55) and Panampilly Nagar (56) coming next to each other. Perumanoor (60), Ravipuram (61), Ernakulam South (62), and Kaloore South (65), Ernakulam Central (66) and Ayyappankaavu (68) are also neighbouring divisions from where women are contesting.

The reservation has thrown out some prominent figures from various parties from their regular seats. They have lost the opportunity to contest from a familiar territory altogether.

Those from the LDF like C K Manisankar (Poonithura), N A Mani (Edappally), E M Sunil Kumar (Pachalam) and Adv N Sasi (Devankulangara), and those from the UDF like David Parambithara (Ravipuram) and T K Padmanabhan Master (Girinagar) are some of the prominent figures who are not contesting this time despite winning several times from the same seats. Though some of them have opted out due to other reasons, some others are not contesting as they are not interested in trying their luck in unfamiliar areas.

“Personal relationships are important in local elections. There is no point in contesting from an unfamiliar place. There will be local leaders in those areas, too,” said David Parambithara.

Adv N Sasi said, “If efficient candidates are contesting from these areas there won’t be much problem. But sometimes women contesting for the first time won’t be familiar with the issues plaguing those areas. If there are experienced councillors in the nearby divisions, it will help them perform better with their co-operation. But if all the neighbouring divisions are represented

by first-timers, they might face some problems.”

Some like A B Sabu (UDF) has opted to contest from Island North, an unfamiliar territory though a UDF bastion.

E M Sunil Kumar (LDF) who represented the last council is being replaced by his wife Sindhu Sunil Kumar who has won from this seat earlier, too. T K Padmanabhan Master (UDF) is being replaced by his wife Bhama Padmanabhan, and K J Prakashan by his wife Mary Calista Prakashan.

A women candidate from the BJP said the problem with reserved seats grouped together is that by the time the candidates learn the tricks of the trade these seats will be in the general category and then they won't be able to contest again next time. But former Deputy Mayor C K Manisankar said there is no problem with this arrangement. “This will give opportunity to new people.”