

**KARNATAKA**  
TUSSELE FOR CM'S CHAIR

**DELHI ELECTION**  
JAY PANDA: AAP DOESN'T HAVE A FACE

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Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah with Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar



BHANU PRAKASH CHANDRA

Shivakumar's workload—he holds water resources and Bengaluru development portfolios, too. Rajanna said Shivakumar should lead the party in the 2028 polls and become the full-term chief minister instead of settling for a two-and-a-half-year term.

Meanwhile, BJP MP and former chief minister Basavaraj Bommai, like other party colleagues, has taken an interest in the matter and predicted that Shivakumar's patience was "nearing breaking point".

A visibly angry Shivakumar stated that state party president's post cannot be bought from a shop, but is earned with leadership qualities and organisational skills. He has jetted to Delhi to get "private meetings" cancelled and also prevented Siddaramaiah tabling the contentious caste survey in the cabinet.

At the peak of the tussle between the two rival camps, ministers in the Siddaramaiah faction also accused Congress general secretary and Karnataka in-charge Randeep Singh Saini for being "partial" towards Shivakumar for not giving them a patient hearing.

A senior Congress leader, who requested anonymity, said that the Siddaramaiah camp was trying to diminish Shivakumar's stature by replacing him as the state party chief or creating parallel power centres by pushing for three to four deputy chief ministers. "The chief minister's coterie working overtime and holding private meetings proved that the secret pact is no rumour," said the leader. "And, it is time for change."

Irked by the constant friction between the factions, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge issued a warning to party leaders to "shut up" and "complete the tasks" assigned to them. "I am here, Rahul ji is also there, to decide on these issues, at the right time," he said. Despite the diktat, Chamarajanagar MP Sunil Bose, son of Social Welfare Minister Dr H.C. Mahadevappa, said Siddaramaiah would remain in office for five years and return in 2028. "There is no talk of replacing the chief minister," he said.

During discussions that followed the

# Give or take

The power-sharing pact in Karnataka cannot be conveniently forgotten now

BY PRATHIMA NANDAKUMAR

**THE “SECRET” POWER-SHARING** agreement brokered by the Congress high command and between Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar ahead of the 2023 assembly polls is a well-kept secret. In fact, the state might see a new chief minister as early as June.

Siddaramaiah’s recent statement that the high command would take a call on whether to replace the chief minister gave credence to the rotational chief minister theory. It was also a clear departure from his earlier statements, dismissing any such arrangement, and his repeated assertion that he would stay a full five years.

The deal was struck when, after the party won in the state, lengthy deliberations reached a dead end with neither Siddaramaiah nor Shivakumar agreeing to opt out of the chief ministerial race. In the last two years, the 50-50 power-sharing pact has often stirred intrigue. While Siddaramaiah loyalists have maintained the rotational formula was a creation of the media, even Shivakumar had played down the existence of a pact.

But, in a recent interview, Shivakumar said there was a “power-sharing agreement” and he would become chief minister at the appropriate time.

Interestingly, the last two months have seen open demands from Congress leaders for a change of guard in both the government and the party (Shivakumar is also the state party president). A third faction has been lobbying for a dalit chief minister or party state president. A dinner meeting hosted by Public Works Department Minister Satish Jarkiholi, attended by Siddaramaiah but not Shivakumar, the leaders’ frequent Delhi trips and another dinner planned by Home Minister G. Parameshwara, but called off at the last minute following the high command’s intervention, all show that Siddaramaiah is in no mood to pass the baton, according to Shivakumar loyalists.

Jarkiholi, Parameshwara and Minister for Cooperation K.N. Rajanna have reminded the party leadership of the Udaipur Declaration (one man, one post), also claiming that party work had slowed because of

