

Indian diaspora makes it big in South African Parliament and provincial legislatures

Published - June 18, 2024 06:00 am IST



K S SUDHI



Anilkumar Kesava Pillai | Photo Credit: Special Arrangement



Mergan Chetty | Photo Credit: Special Arrangement



Marlaine Nair | Photo Credit: Special Arrangement



Riona Gokool | Photo Credit: Special arrangement

A few candidates of Indian descent belonging to various political parties have made it big in the recently held elections of South Africa and posted back-to-back electoral wins to the National Assembly and provincial legislatures.

While Mergan Chetty won his third consecutive stint in parliament this year, Shara Singh, a member of Provincial Legislature from KwaZulu-Natal, graduated to the national politics and became a member of parliament. Mr. Chetty, who said he was the “longest serving member of Indian descent of Democratic Alliance (DA) in parliament” had earlier represented Pietermaritzburg City Council in 2006.

Ms. Singh resigned her membership in the local government after being elected to parliament. Of the 87 parliament members of the DA, four are of Indian descent, Ms. Singh told *The Hindu*.

Ashor Saruppen won his second straight term in parliament. Mr. Saruppen, whose ancestors came from Uttar Pradesh, had also served as a member of the Gauteng provincial legislature. He claimed that he was the most senior person of Indian descent in the leadership of the DA.

Narend Singh, leader of Inkatha Freedom Party, Fasiha Hassan of African National Congress (ANC), Imran Ismail Moosa of Al Jama-Ah, and Visvin Gopal Reddy and Shunmugam Ramasamy Moodley of uMkhonto we Sizwe party too made it to parliament.

The newly elected members were sworn in on Friday.

While most of the elected members of Indian lineage were born in South Africa, Anilkumar Kesava Pillai, a native of Thiruvalla in Pathanamthitta district of Kerala, established himself in the local politics of the country 40 years ago. Mr. Pillai, who reached South Africa as a young teacher, had emerged as a trade union leader of teachers. He was first elected to the provincial council of Eastern Cape in 2019 as a representative of the ANC. Besides Mr. Pillai, Imran Keeka, Marlaine Nair and Riona Gokool, all members of the DA, were also re-elected to the provincial legislature of KwaZulu-Natal.

Meanwhile, some of the independent candidates and political formations that had espoused the cause of Indians failed to secure enough support.

(This correspondent was recently in Durban on an invitation from the South African Tourism)