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Scindia impact: 28 new mins join Shivraj cabinet

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Bhopal: The Jyotiraditya Scindia impact was clear in the Shivraj Singh Chouhan cabinet on Thursday as 28 MLAs took oath in a much-delayed expansion. With 12 of them being from Team Scindia, the Rajya Sabha MP thundered, "Tiger zinda hai." They were the exact words Chouhan had uttered on December 20, 2018, after losing the assembly polls, and had asserted that the Congress government would not last its full term. The Madhya Pradesh cabinet now has 34 members, including the chief minister. Former Congress MLAs who propelled BJP back to power now make up 41% of the Shivraj cabinet.

As many as 14 of the 22 (64%) Congress MLAs who broke away with Scindia in March, toppling the Kamal Nath government, have been made ministers ahead of make-or-break bypolls. In contrast, only about 19% of BJP's 107 MLAs made it into the cabinet. Among those left out on Thursday were six of the old guard who had been with Chouhan in his earlier cabinets. This brought into focus Chouhan's cryptic remark of the previous day that whenever there is a churn, nectar is created "but Shiv has to drink the poison".

There was still no word on whether there would be two deputy chief ministers — Naroottam Mishra and Scindia aide Tulsiram Silawat. Also, never before have so many non-legislators been made ministers. All 14 ex-Congress leaders rewarded for bring-



Former Union minister and BJP MP Jyotiraditya Scindia with CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan at state BJP headquarters in Bhopal on Thursday

ing BJP back to power will face bypolls, likely in September. Sixteen of these seats are in Gwalior-Chambal region, and eight of the new ministers are from these parts.

The Scindia supporters included in the cabinet on Thursday are Imarti Devi, Prabhuram Chaudhary, Mahendra Singh Sisodia, Pradyuman Singh, Brijendra Singh Yadav, Rajvardhan Singh Dattigaon, Giriraj Dandotiya, Suresh Dhakad and OPS Bhadoriya. Three former Congress veterans, who had rebelled just before Scindia did, have been rewarded as well — Bisahul Singh, Adal Singh Kansana and Hardeep Dang.

CM Chouhan urged everyone to "work as a team", especially with the Covid-19 crisis still on. "Our only aim is the welfare of people and development of the state," the CM tweeted. Among the BJP seniors who have made it are former LOP Gopal Bhargava, who had warned the party

against "ignoring seniors", Yashodhara Raje Scindia, Bhupendra Singh, Vijay Shah, Vishwas Sarang, Prem Singh Patel, Om Prakash Sakhlecha and Usha Thakur. Former minister Sanjay Pathak, who is said to have played a key role in the events that led to the formation of the BJP government, was left out. His phone was switched off on Thursday evening.

Seven former Shivraj cabinet colleagues have been re-selected and nine are new faces. There are eight ministers of state in Chouhan's team of 34. There is only one vacant slot left. The expansion comes after a prolonged tussle over names, with Scindia appearing to have the upper hand in the tug-of-war. It took 102 days for Chouhan to have a full cabinet after being sworn in for a fourth term as CM. For nearly a month he was a one-man cabinet and the first "Covid ministry" of five was sworn in on April 21.