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Cabinet: No old-timers for now, says BJP top brass

BENGALURU, DHNS: In a last-minute twist to the Cabinet expansion quagmire, only 10 BJP legislators — those who defected from the Congress and the JD(S)—will be inducted as ministers on Thursday, dashing the hopes of BJP old-timers who were hopeful of making it.

Thus far, 10 newly-elected MLAs and three BJP natives were to be inducted. But in-

fighting within the party on who those three should be forced the BJP central leadership to step in.

"Our Delhi leaders have said that only 10 MLAs should be inducted for now. On inducting others, I have been asked to come to Delhi," Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa told reporters on Wednesday evening.

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MLAS TO BE SWORN IN TODAY

- Ramesh Jarkiholi • ST Somashekar • Byrathi Basavaraj
- K Sudhakar • Shivaram Hebbar • Shrimanth Patil
- B C Patil • Anand Singh • K Gopalaiah
- K C Narayan Gowda

No old-timers for now, says BJP top brass

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The decision has unsettled BJP old-timers, especially eight-time legislator Umesh Katti who had raised a banner of revolt when he was left out when 17 ministers were inducted in August 2019. Former ministers Arvind Limbavali and CP Yogeeshwar, who were expecting berths, have been left in the lurch.

Ten of the 11 MLAs who won the recent bypolls, except Mahesh Kumathalli (Athani), will be sworn in as ministers by Governor Vajubhai R Vala on Thursday.

"I want to assure Katti that 100% he will be made a minister. I've already assured him this. He was to have been sworn in, but the central leadership has said only those who resigned and came should be taken for now," Yediyurappa said. Asked about Kumathalli, Yediyurappa said, "I'll talk to him. It'll be difficult to make him a minister. I will try to give

him some other big responsibility."

Disgruntlement among party ranks over the induction of Yogeeshwar is said to be the prime reason for the BJP central leadership to prevent old-timers from being sworn in, according to sources. Apparently, having two ministers who lost elections could further split BJP MLAs into camps. There was already discord within the party when Laxman Savadi, who lost the 2018 polls, was made deputy chief minister. Yogeeshwar, too, lost the 2018 polls.

That discord still prevailed became clear when CM's political secretary MP Renukacharya, on Wednesday, lashed out at Deputy Chief Minister C N Ashwath Narayan for backing Yogeeshwar's entry into the Cabinet. In a tweet that was soon deleted, Renukacharya said Narayan should sacrifice his place if he wanted Yogeeshwar in.