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BJP dumps K'taka shortlist, fields grassroots workers

Karyakartas
With RSS Stamp
Picked For RS

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Bengaluru: The national BJP leadership sprang a surprise on Monday by fielding grassroots workers — Eran-na Kadadi and Ashok Gasti — for the June 19 Rajya Sabha elections from Karnata-ka, ignoring the recommen-dations of the state unit.

Party sources said Kada-

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di and Gasti are district-level party workers with an RSS background. They have served the party for more than 30 years in various ca-pacities. The state unit had proposed the names of out-going Rajya Sabha member and educationist Prabhakar Kore, former Lok Sabha member Ramesh Katti and hotelier and party function-ary Prakash Shetty.

Kadadi and Gasti are ex-pected to get a smooth passage to Rajya Sabha, alongside for-mer PM and JD(S) supremo HD Deve Gowda and Congress

STALWARTS & SURPRISE CHOICES



DEVE GOWDA

The 87-yr-old former PM emerges as consensus candidate. Set for second Rajya Sabha term after BJP

decides not to field 3rd candidate



MALLIKARJUN KHARGE

Congress veteran eyes first stint in Rajya Sabha after first-ever electoral defeat in the Lok Sabha elections last year



ERANNA KADADI

A Lingayat, he is BJP's Belagavi division in-charge. Former BJP state secy and Belagavi district panchayat president, he lost assembly elections in 1994



ASHOK GASTI

Member of Savitha Samaj, he is a lawyer by profession and former general secretary of the BJP's OBC Cell. Also former chairperson of Backward Classes Development Corporation

Kadadi & Gasti are seen as grassroots organisational workers with the backing of RSS veteran & BJP gen secy BL Santhosh

BJP to add 9 seats, NDA tally to hit 100

The BJP, which saw a dip in strength from 81 to 75 in the Rajya Sabha after biennial polls in March, is likely to add nine seats to its current tally after June 19 polls, taking the total count of NDA's seats to 100 making it fairly secure in terms of passing legislation as it will need just 22 more votes for a simple majority, reports Vishwa Mohan. If it wins nine seats, then BJP numbers will hit 84, highest in the Rajya Sabha. The Congress tally could drop from 39 to 37. TNN

veteran Mallikarjun Kharge. While Kharge filed his nomi-nation papers on Monday, Gowda, who has emerged as consensus candidate of all three major parties, will file his papers on Tuesday.

According to a top BJP

functionary, the names bore the imprint of BJP national general secretary (organisa-tion) BL Santhosh and Union minister for parliamentary affairs Pralhad Joshi.

► **Biggles surprised, P 4**

BJP biggies surprised, karyakartas upbeat

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This is for the first time that someone (Gasti) from Savitha Samaj is getting into Parliament. I express my deepest gratitude to the selection," said senior BJP leader and rural development minister KS Eshwarappa.

The selection is believed to have left state BJP leaders, including chief minister BS Yediyurappa, flummoxed. "It is as surprising a decision as the elevation of a defeated MLA Laxman Savadi as deputy chief minister," said a senior minister.

BJP insiders said it is a well-thought-out decision aimed at boosting the morale of grassroots party workers, and sending a message to all established leaders in the party not to take their position for granted. The decision also shows the influence of RSS in such matters as both Kadadi and Gasti are said to have been handpicked by Santhosh.

Political analyst Harish Ramaswamy said a clear message has been sent to state leaders, among others, that "it is RSS which controls BJP and not vice versa" as it used to be in the past. "The decision also shattered the popular belief that one should be influential or a big leader to be an RS member," he said.

State leaders also perceived the move as an effort by the leadership to pare the influence of the Kattis, Kores and Jarkiholis in the politically-strategic Belagavi district.

While the upper echelons decoded the decision, the karyakartas welcomed it and praised the Modi-Shah-Nadda trio on social media for recognising grassroots workers. Several tweets congratulated the leadership on not being bogged down by lobbying.

Bengaluru South MP Tejasvi Surya tweeted: "Who does BJP belong to? To its most humble and dedicated Karyakarta toiling for its rise. This is the message that BJP has sent by nominating to Rajya Sabha two very senior Karyakartas who have worked three decades for party organisation in Karnataka."