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Govt gets lifeline as speaker seeks time

Baig Resigns; DKS Leaves For Mumbai

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: The gasping Congress-JD(S) coalition government came up for air on Tuesday as speaker KR Ramesh Kumar decided to take at least six days to look into the resignations of 13 MLAs — 10 of Congress and three of JD(S) — saying, "every step I take will become history, so I can't be committing a mistake". Kumar said he needs to be convinced that the resignations are "voluntary" and "genuine".

The move came just in ti-

> FULL COVERAGE: PAGE 4

me for the government which suffered yet another blow, with the resignation of suspended Congress MLA Roshan Baig. Emerging from the speaker's office at Vidhana Soudha after putting in his papers around noon, Baig said he was not joining the rebels. "I am not going to Mumbai or Delhi. Being the chairman of the state Haj committee, I am going to the airport to oversee arrangements for the pilgrims," he said.

Baig's resignation tipped the scale further against the ruling combine. With the support of the two independents and the lone BSP MLA, the BJP would have 108 MLAs in the 224-member House, where the halfway mark is 113. Should the resignations of the 14 MLAs, including that of Baig, be accepted, the Congress-JD(S) tally would be reduced to 102.

POWER WAR ON THREE FRONTS

BEHIND

- > Speaker takes up 5 of the 13 resignations as they are in the right format, to meet rebel MLAs on July 12 and 15
- > This window gives the ruling combine time to salvage its numbers



SHOW OF UNITY: Cong MLAs protest at Vidhana Soudha on Tuesday

- > Rebel MLAs return to Mumbai after a brief detour to Satara in western Maharashtra
- > Cong troubleshooter DK Shivakumar and JD(S) MLA KM Shivalinge Gowda are set to fly to Mumbai on Wednesday to meet lawmakers

- > Cong chief Rahul joins party in raising slogans in Lok Sabha; Rajya Sabha adjourned over crisis
- > Cong sends Ghulam Nabi Azad and Kapil Sibal to Bengaluru to save govt. Azad had stitched the Cong-JD(S) coalition along with Rajasthan CM Ashok Gehlot

Echo in Parliament, Rahul joins protest

Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday joined Congress members in raising slogans in the Lok Sabha over Karnataka political drama, and the issue stalled proceedings in the Rajya Sabha too. Union minister Rajnath Singh blamed the Congress for the crisis. P 7

HDK trust vote likely on July 17

Chief minister HD Kumaraswamy could be asked to prove majority in the house on July 17 by speaker KR Ramesh Kumar or governor Vajubhai Vala, sources said. The government's fate hangs fire with a wave of ruling MLAs resignations in the past week.

Scrutinizing the resignations, speaker Kumar said only five of the 13 letters submitted on July 6 were in the prescribed format. These belonged to R Ramalinga Reddy, K Gopalajiah, Anand Singh, K Narayan Gowda and Pratap Gowda Patil. The remaining eight MLAs, he said, would have to resubmit their resignations.

Kumar said governor Vajubhai R Vala had sent him two letters on the political de-

velopments in the state and expressed confidence that he would uphold constitutional norms as speaker. Kumar revealed the governor had suggested that he take up the resignations at the earliest.

"The rules say only if the speaker is convinced that the resignations are voluntary and genuine, he can accept them," Kumar said.

> Continued on page 4

DKS, Shivalinge Gowda set to leave Mumbai today to meet dissidents

>Continued from page 1

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If everything happens through postal correspondence, then I'm not required at all," Kumar added. The reference was to resignations reportedly posted to him. According to House rules, the resignations must be in accepted format, addressed to the speaker and handed over.

Kumar said he has written to the rebels that their resignations are in the correct format to appear before him in two batches — on July 12 and 15. "I have to make a conscious decision. Every step I take

will become history. Future generations should not look at me like an accused. Therefore, I'll consider the feeling of the public, the Constitution, the rulebook and the spirit and interpretation of law."

REBEL TROUBLE

Seizing the opportunity, Congress plunged into renewal efforts to solve the crisis. The speaker, DK Shivakumar, is said to be leading attempts to get in touch with the rebels to persuade them to withdraw their resignation and accept a cabinet

birth as a "return gift". Shivakumar and JD(S) MLA KM Shivalinge Gowda are set to leave for Mumbai on Wednesday to meet the rebel MLAs. "If one person returns, more will follow. We are confident that will happen because of the delay," said a senior Congress leader.

Help is also arriving from Delhi. AICC deputed senior party leaders, including MP Anand K. Kulkarni, to Bangalore for "political and legal management" of the crisis. Party leaders have moved the speaker's office seeking disqualification of 10 of the rebels

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