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Congress picks B.K. Hariprasad, Naseer Ahmed for Council polls

With its 68 MLAs, the party can ensure victory of two candidates

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In a surprise decision, the All-India Congress Committee (AICC) has fielded its general secretary B.K. Hariprasad and incumbent MLC Naseer Ahmed as candidates for elections to the Legislative Council from the Assembly, scheduled for June 29. Congress interim president Sonia Gandhi cleared both names on Wednesday.

The Congress had denied Mr. Hariprasad re-nomination to the Rajya Sabha. His term as MP will come to an end on June 25. Veteran leader M. Mallikarjun Kharge was fielded in the just-concluded Rajya Sabha polls and was elected unopposed.

Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee president-designate D.K. Shivakumar is said to have favoured the candidature of Mr. Hariprasad, while Leader of the Opposition Siddaramaiah backed his loyalist Mr.



B.K. Hariprasad and Naseer Ahmed



Ahmed. Mr. Ahmed's term as MLC will end on June 30, sources in the party said.

With 68 MLAs, the Congress can ensure victory for two candidates.

Sources in the party said Mr. Hariprasad had not even sought ticket to contest in the elections, but the party fielded him apparently to counter another OBC leader. Mr. Ahmed was given ticket under the minority quota.

Mr. Hariprasad contested the Lok Sabha elections in

1999 and 2019 from Bengaluru South and lost both times to the BJP candidate. In 1999, he lost to former Union Minister Ananth Kumar, while in 2019 he was defeated by Tejasvi Surya. He was the candidate of the united opposition for the post of Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha and lost to Harivansh Narayan Singh of the NDA.

Murmurs of discontent

The selection of these candidates has not gone well with

Why they were chosen

- Sources in the Congress said Hariprasad had not even sought ticket to contest in the Legislative Council elections, but the party fielded him apparently to counter another OBC leader. Naseer Ahmed was given ticket under the minority quota

a section in the party, according to sources. Many young and senior leaders have questioned the criteria adopted for their selection.

A Congress functionary questioned Mr. Hariprasad's contributions to the party. Another senior leader alleged that Mr. Ahmed had worked for the defeat of former Union Minister K.H. Muniyappa in Kolar constituency in the 2019 elections. Then, a section of leaders had demanded his suspension from the party.