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## MLAs resign, Biren Singh govt in trouble

PRASANTA MAZUMDAR @ Guwahati

THE BJP-led coalition government in Manipur has been reduced to a minority on Wednesday after three of its MLAs resigned from the party as well as the Assembly and six other MLAs withdrew their support.

The development means that N Biren Singh's government now enjoys the support of just 23 MLAs - 18 from BJP, four from Naga People's Front (NPF) and one from Lok Janshakti Party (LJP). The National People's Party, which had four MLAs, including three ministers, the lone Trinamool MLA and an independent MLA from Jiribam also withdrew support from the government.

Congress has 20 MLAs in the assembly. If the six non-BJP MLAs ditching BJP extend their support to the Congress, it will take the grand old party's tally to 26. The 60-member Manipur House has an effective strength of 59 after (now former) Minister Shyamkumar Singh was disqualified in March following an order issued by the Supreme Court.

Seven other Congress MLAs, who had sided with the BJP, are likely to be disqualified soon as the Manipur High Court last week ordered Speaker Yumnam Khemchand to "restrain" their entry in the Assembly. Once they are disqualified, the strength of the Assembly will go further down to 52. It means support of 27 MLAs will be enough to form a government.

In the 2017 state elections, the Congress had grabbed 28 seats as against the BJP's 21 but the saffron party still managed to form the government with support from other parties.