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# Speaker disqualifies 3 Congress MLAs

They stand barred from participating during the term of the current Assembly

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SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
BENGALURU

Two days after the Janata Dal (Secular)-Congress government lost the trust vote, Karnataka Assembly Speaker K.R. Ramesh Kumar disqualified three rebel legislators with immediate effect till the end of the 15th Vidhana Sabha.

Speaking at a press conference late on Thursday, Mr. Ramesh Kumar promised to take a decision on the resignation of the 13 other rebel legislators "in the next couple of days". He added, "I know this matter will go to court."

The Speaker disqualified Congress legislators Ramesh L. Jarkiholi and Mahesh Kumathalli, representing the Gokak and Athani constituencies in Belagavi district, and KPIP legislator R. Shan-

## Acting tough

Two days after the JD(S)-Congress coalition government in Karnataka lost the vote of confidence, Assembly Speaker K.R. Ramesh Kumar disqualified three MLAs

### DISQUALIFIED CONGRESS MLAs



R Shankar (Ranebennur)



Ramesh Jarkiholi (Gokak)



Mahesh Kumathalli (Athani)

kar, representing Ranebennur in Haveri district, under the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution.

Mr. Shankar had merged his party with the Congress just last month.

The disqualification of the three MLAs, which is open to judicial review, brings down the strength of the Assembly to 222, including the nomi-

nated member.

The Speaker's decision adds a new dimension to the already fluid situation. While the Congress-JD(S) coalition has already been voted out, the BJP is yet to stake claim to form the next government.

"They have been disqualified with immediate effect and till the expiry of the le-

The three disqualified MLAs will not be able to contest bypolls to re-enter the House in its present term

If MLAs change their mind according to their whims and fancies, shouldn't the voter who has elected them have a say? I am setting a precedent here

K.R. RAMESH KUMAR, SPEAKER



While the disqualification proceedings against Mr. Jharkeholi and Mr. Kumathalli have been initiated based on the Congress's petition against them on February 11, the proceedings against Mr. Shankar are based on the party's complaint on July 7.

Over the last two days, after the collapse of the 14-month-old H.D. Kumaraswamy-led government, all eyes were on the Speaker's decision on the resignation of the rebel legislators and the disqualification proceedings initiated against them.

Mr. Ramesh Kumar said: "I will be taking a decision on the resignations of [the 13 other] rebel MLAs in a couple of days."

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# Speaker disqualifies three rebel MLAs

Though he acknowledged that the anti-defection law could not be used by parties to throttle internal dissent, however, cited the judgement of Vice-President M. Venkaiah Naidu in the case of former minister and JD(U) leader Sharad Yadav's disqualification from the Rajya Sabha, and the disqualification of 18 AIADMK legislators in Tamil Nadu after they approached the Governor.

"Whatever Karnataka rebel legislators told the Supreme Court, they could have told the same thing to the government," he said, referring to the charges that the rebels made against the government in their affidavits filed in apex court.

"The party's decision is collective. If individuals have a problem, they have to raise the issue within the party. It is a settled law and there is clarity (on this issue)," Mr Ramesh Kumar said.

However, when his attention was drawn to several of the disqualified AIADMK MLAs, he said that he was not aware of the circumstances in which this happened.

When asked if he would resign before taking a decision on resignations, he said: "Only after I complete my responsibility and not going against my conscience that I will decide on my future."

On his suggestion that voters should be heard before a decision is taken on the MLAs' resignations, he said: "I am setting a new precedent. Let the country and State discuss it."

"Let the lawmakers take a decision on public hearing before the resignations are accepted."

Mr Ramesh Kumar added that the opinion of the voters can be considered depending on the prevailing situation.