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BJP rewards rebel MLAs with tickets

Saffron party faces some opposition to choice of a few candidates

BENGALURU, DHNS

A day after the Supreme Court ruled that the 17 disqualified legislators could contest elections, 15 of them joined the BJP, which named 14 of them as the party's candidates for the December 5 byelections.

There were surprises in store as the BJP selected former corporator M Saravana as the candidate for Shivajinagar constituency, while withholding the ticket for the Ranebennur constituency, previously represented by R Shankar.

Seven-time MLA R Roshan Baig, who had decided to join the BJP, was not inducted at



Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa (centre) and party state chief Nalin Kumar Kateel (right) welcome MLA Ramesh Jarkiholi into the party on Thursday. DH PHOTO/B H SHIVAKUMAR

the last moment. He is now likely to contest as an Independent.

Among the rebels who joined the BJP were Ramesh Jarkiholi, A H Vishwanath, Mahesh Kumtahalli, Shivar-am Hebbar, B C Patil, Anand Singh, ST Somshekar, Byrathi Basavaraj, K Sudhakar, Shrimanth Patil, Muniratna, Pratap Gouda Patil, K Gopalaiiah, Narayana Gowda

and Shankar. One more rebel M T B Nagaraj skipped the induction ceremony as he had joined the BJP earlier.

Chief Minister B S Yediyurappa expressed confidence that the BJP would win all 15 seats. "They are future MLAs and future ministers," Yediyurappa assured, adding that the party would fulfil its promise to the rebels.

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Hours after the rebels were inducted, all but Shankar were declared as BJP candidates for the constituencies previously represented by them. However, suspense continued over whether Shankar would be fielded from Ranebennur, due to dwindling prospects of the former MLA from the Karnataka Pragyanantha Janata Party.

With uncertainty hanging over Shankar's candidature, other rebels like Ramesh and Muniratna tried to lobby in favour of him. A decision on the BJP candidate from the constituency is expected in a day or two. Apparently, RDPR Minister K S Eshwarappa wants his son Kanthesh to get the Ranebennur ticket, while Haveri district BJP leader Shivaraj has also laid claim. Soon after the candidates were announced, opposition by a section of BJP leaders against fielding the rebels intensified. Party workers from Mahalakshmi Layout protested in front of the BJP office against Gopalaiiah's candidature.

BJP is already facing a rebellion at Hoskote constituency, where Sharath Bache-gowda will contest as an Independent. He even filed his nomination. Sharath lost to Nagaraj last year, and did not yield to the party's attempts to mollify him.