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Four ministers skip BSY's cabinet meeting after portfolio change

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Bengaluru: Four ministers, upset about the change of portfolios, skipped the first meeting of a full-fledged BS Yediyurappa cabinet on Thursday. JC Madhuswamy, K Gopalaiah, MTB Nagaraj and K Sudhakar cited other engagements to miss the meeting, though many in and outside BJP saw it as their silent protest against the cabinet reshuffle.

Embarrassed by the development, Yediyurappa asked some senior ministers to pacify the four. Revenue minister R Ashoka was seen trying to persuade them over the phone, requesting them to attend the briefing. The four did not relent and reportedly ignored even the chief minister's call.

Home minister Basavaraj Bommai, who took over the law and parliamentary affairs department from Madhuswamy, sought to downplay his colleagues' absence, saying they had prior appointments and had taken permission from Yediyurappa. "Madhuswamy had to attend an event in Tumakuru. The others also had engagements," he said.

Bommai added that some resentment was natural after cabinet expansion



SILENT PROTEST: JC Madhuswamy, K Gopalaiah, MTB Nagaraj and K Sudhakar cited other engagements to miss Thursday's briefing

CAN'T PLEASE EVERYONE

“It's not an easy job to expand the cabinet and give everyone the portfolio of their choice. You cannot please everyone all the time. There are some minor differences, but they will be sorted out through dialogue. If any minister is still not happy after the talks, their plea will be considered.”

BS Yediyurappa | CHIEF MINISTER

or portfolio rejig and such issues would be resolved. “The chief minister and the party are capable of handling such situations. He has already spoken to all ministers, who have accept-

ed the changes,” he added.

Madhuswamy also lost the charge of minor irrigation and was instead given medical education and Karnataka and culture. Health minister Sudhakar was divested of medical education, whereas Gopalaiah lost food and civil supplies. Nagaraj is not happy about getting the responsibility of the excise department; he wants the housing portfolio, which is currently held by V Somanna.

Earlier, Madhuswamy and Nagaraj had threatened to resign. Nagaraj was the first to openly express disappointment on Thursday. “What does the exercise portfolio entail? Contrac-

tors supply liquor and this is picked up by the department and distributed to shops. What role does a minister have in this?” he said. “In the previous coalition government, I had the housing portfolio and I worked to create housing for the poor and redevelop slums. I was keen on that this time, too.”

Gopalaiah said that he worked hard as the food and civil supplies minister. “For the past 11 months, I have worked tirelessly to bring a good name to the government and the party. I had hoped to do further good for the people of the state by revamping the PDS system. We will meet the CM and deliberate on the issue,” he said.

The former Congress and JD(S) MLAs reportedly went into a huddle at Sudhakar's house to discuss their next steps.

Meanwhile, the cabinet on Thursday approved a Rs 48-crore lift irrigation project in Honnali, in an apparent attempt to pacify MLA MP Renukacharya, who represents this assembly constituency. Renukacharya is upset about being overlooked for a cabinet role. Under the project, 19 lakes in Honnali taluk, Davanagere district, will get river water.