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Ashoka to supervise Covid operations

TIMES NEWS NETWORK
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Bengaluru: In another change at the helm in the fight against the virus, chief minister BS Yediyurappa on Thursday handed revenue minister R Ashoka responsibility of overseeing Covid-19-related operations, the fourth man in the hot seat since the outbreak.

Ashoka takes over from medical education minister K Sudhakar, who is in quarantine since some members of his family tested positive. Officials in the CMO say it's a temporary arrangement till Sudhakar returns.

"Deputy chief minister Ashwath Narayan or health minister B Sriramulu were obvious choices, but Yediyurappa preferred Ashoka," sources said.

Ashoka, as vice-chairman of Karnataka Disaster Management Authority, was asked to manage the migrant workers issue after initial hiccups. Yediyurappa was reportedly impressed with the way he handled things and therefore decided to give him charge of Covid-19 operations.

"I don't think Ashoka will be changed even if Sudhakar returns," one source suggested. Karnataka's fight against the pandemic has been shambolic and disjointed. Sriramulu and Sudhakar were first put in charge, but the two seemed to be working at cross purposes and there were complaints of

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lack of coordination and two power centres.

Yediyurappa then delineated responsibilities for the two. While Sudhakar was asked to handle Bengaluru, Sriramulu was given charge of the rest of Karnataka. But that too backfired as there were complaints of "one of them" hogging headlines in the media. The chief minister then appointed education minister S Suresh Kumar as the state's Covid-19 spokesperson.

While Sriramulu continues to head the Covid-19 taskforce and will oversee state-level operations, Sudhakar's role is limited to overseeing the War Room in Bengaluru and dealing with city-related issues.

The chaos has not been lost on the opposition which slammed the government for the mess. They accused Sriramulu and Sudhakar of working in silos, claiming there was no coordination between the two ministers, hampering the fight against the virus.