

Karnataka BJP promises Muslim minister

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which has not fielded a single Muslim candidate for the upcoming assembly polls in Karnataka, Wednesday appealed for minority votes promising to induct a Muslim into its ministry if elected to power.

'We did not have any Muslim leader whose victory we could assure. Hence we could not give ticket to any Muslim candidate. But we will have a Muslim leader elected to the legislative council and induct him into the ministry,' BJP's chief ministerial candidate B.S. Yediyurappa told reporters here.

More than 17 million people are eligible to vote in 89 constituencies in the first phase of polling May 10. The second phase of voting in 66 constituencies is to be held May 16 and the third phase for 69 seats May 22. Counting of votes is scheduled for May 25.

Yediyurappa said there had been Muslim ministers in the previous BJP-led National Democratic Alliance government in New Delhi. BJP is not against minorities and as Karnataka finance minister, he had presented two budgets with a number of measures for their welfare, he said.

The BJP leader is facing a tough battle in his constituency Shikaripura in Shimoga where he is pitted against former Karnataka chief minister and Samajwadi Party leader S. Bangarappa.

Congress and Janata Dal-Secular (JD-S) of former prime minister H.D. Deve Gowda have not fielded their candidates in Shikaripura and are backing Bangarappa in order to consolidate secular votes against Yediyurappa.

Yediyurappa mocked the Congress and JD-S for supporting Bangarappa against him.

'Congress has not named its chief ministerial candidate. Now that it is supporting Bangarappa in Shikaripura, why can't it name him as their chief ministerial candidate?' he asked.

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