

BJP invited to form its first ministry in south

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s chief minister-designate B.S. Yeddyurappa was invited Tuesday by Karnataka Governor Rameshwar Thakur to form the government in the state after the party won near majority in the assembly elections. The party will assume office on Friday.

Along with Yeddyurappa around 14 others, including two or three independents supporting the party, are expected to be sworn in at 1.50 p.m. in the ceremony to be held in front of the state secretariat building in the heart of Bangalore.

K.S. Eshwarappa, D.H. Shankaramurthy, Arvind Limbavali, C.M. Udasi, Govind Karajol, Shankaralinge Gowda, Lakshman Soudi and Shobha Karandlaje are among those likely to be sworn in, a party leader said.

Shoba Karandlaje, who won from Bangalore's Yashwantpur constituency will be the sole woman to take oath. She is entering the assembly for the first time. She is now a member of the legislative council.

At least three of the six independents supporting the party will take oath, said a BJP leader, requesting anonymity.

A Muslim leader will also be inducted as was promised by Yeddyurappa during the election campaign. The BJP had not fielded even a single Muslim as its candidate which had attracted criticism. Yeddyurappa said the party tried sincerely to nominate one but did not have a winning candidate.

He had promised that if elected the party would swear-in a Muslim member in the first instalment and then have him/her elected to the legislative council.

'The swearing in will take place Friday,' Yeddyurappa told reporters after meeting the governor Tuesday evening.

The governor invited Yeddyurappa to form the government after the election commission officially communicated to him the results of the Karnataka assembly polls held in three phases on May 10, 16 and 22.

The results were announced Sunday. The BJP bagged 110 seats in the 225-member (including one nominated member) house. The Congress won 80 seats, the Janata Dal-Secular 28 and independents six.

The BJP has won over all the six independents to support it, taking the numbers on its side to 116, three more than the 113 required for majority.

While five independents pledged support Monday, the sixth one did Tuesday.

Yeddyurappa met Thakur late Monday evening along with the five supporting independents and staked claim to form the government.

The 65-year-old Yeddyurappa was keen to take oath on Wednesday itself but fulfilling formalities, like official notification on the completion of the election process and revocation of president's rule put paid to his hopes.

The BJP secured the support of Sudhakar D. from Hiriya constituency, Shivaraj (Kanakagiri), P.M. Narendra Swamy (Malavalli), G.D. Shekar (Hosadurga) and Venkataramanappa (Pavagada), after daylong efforts Monday in the face of attempts by a section of Congress and Janata Dal-Secular to influence these independent members against backing the BJP.

On Tuesday it succeeded in wooing the sixth independent, Varthur Prakash (Kolar), also.

The delay in swearing in gives more time to BJP to make elaborate preparations to turn the function into a grand show because it is the first time the party will take power in the country's south on its own.

BJP leaders including party president Rajnath Singh, L.K. Advani, Sushma Swaraj, Arun Jaitely and Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi had come in November last year to witness Yeddyurappa take oath as chief minister at the head of a shaky coalition with the JD-S. His rule lasted just one week as the JD-S withdrew support.

All these stalwarts as well as many other party leaders and thousands of supporters from across Karnataka are expected to watch the swearing in ceremony Friday.

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