

## Rebel TDP MPs to join Congress, Chiranjeevi's party

The two rebel Telugu Desam Party (TDP) MPs who defied the party to vote for the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) in the trust vote are likely to be expelled - with one joining the Congress and the other actor Chiranjeevi's soon to be launched party.

The two MPs are D.K. Adikeshavulu Naidu, who represents Chittoor in the Lok Sabha, and Manda Jagannatham from Nagarkurnool. Both defied the party whip Tuesday to vote for the trust motion, causing major embarrassment to TDP chief N. Chandrababu Naidu, who was at the forefront of efforts to defeat the motion of confidence.

Shocked by their defiance, the TDP leadership is planning to expel both MPs. Party sources said a decision in this regard would be taken in a day or two.

The open revolt will bring down the TDP's strength in the Lok Sabha to four.

The TDP suffered the setback at a time the former Andhra Pradesh chief minister was trying to re-emerge as a key leader in national politics and forge a grand alliance with the Left parties and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP).

While Adikeshavulu Naidu's vote was declared invalid on technical grounds, Jagannatham's vote was counted among the 275 polled in favour of the government.

Adikesavulu Naidu's vote was reportedly declared invalid by Lok Sabha Speaker Somnath Chatterjee. He could not cast his vote electronically and signed the specified slip marking his choice but later rushed to the speaker to say he had 'erroneously' cast his vote against the government though he wanted to support it.

Jagannatham Wednesday met Congress president Sonia Gandhi in [New Delhi](#) and reportedly expressed his desire to join the party while Adikeshavulu Naidu is likely to join Chiranjeevi's proposed party.

Jagannatham told a television channel that he voted according to his conscience and denied the allegation by TDP parliamentary party leader K. Yerran Naidu that he was bribed by the Congress.

'I felt that the nuclear deal is in the national interest and the government should not be brought down,' he said, challenging Yerran Naidu to prove his allegation.

While Adikesavulu Naidu has been toying with the idea of joining Chiranjeevi's party for the last few months, the reason for Jagannatham's switching loyalties remains a mystery.

Adikesavulu Naidu, who hails from the Kapu community, has been upset as the Chittoor Lok Sabha seat has been reserved for scheduled castes in the delimitation exercise. The constituency is in Chittoor district, from where Chandrababu Naidu hails.

Jagannatham is a leader of Madiga sub-caste of the scheduled castes. He switched loyalties at a time when Madigas are mounting pressure for categorisation of scheduled castes for sharing reservation benefits.

This is the latest in a series of setbacks to TDP. About half a dozen senior leaders of the party including T. Devender Goud, who was considered number two, have quit the party in the last two months.

While Goud launched a new party to fight for separate statehood to Telangana, others are likely to join Chiranjeevi's party, which is expected to be launched next month.

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