

## Jharkhand government in minority as four ministers quit

Ranchi - Jharkhand Chief Minister Arjun Munda's National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government was Tuesday reduced to a minority after four ministers quit and aligned with the opposition United Progressive Alliance (UPA).

While irrigation minister Kamlesh Singh announced his resignation Tuesday morning, disgruntled independent ministers Madhu Koda, Harinarayan Rai and Enos Ekka soon joined him by faxing their resignations to Governor Syed Sibtey Razi.

Parliamentary affairs and mines minister Koda, transport minister Ekka, and forest minister Rai have reportedly been in talks with the leadership of the Congress that leads the UPA.

With the four ministers quitting, the ruling alliance's strength in the 82-member assembly has been reduced to 39.

The rebel trio arrived here from Gurgaon near Delhi in a chartered plane Tuesday evening and met the governor.

'We have resigned from the cabinet and withdrawn support to the government,' Koda told reporters after the meeting.

Asked if he would be the next chief minister, Koda said: 'UPA leaders will decide about the chief minister.'

However, Munda, who returned from [New Delhi](#) Tuesday evening after attending the chief ministers' meeting on internal security called by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, was still optimistic.

'We will prove our majority on the floor of the house. We are also ready for an election,' the chief minister said.

While the rebels were in talks with the opposition for a few days, the drama intensified Monday midnight when police detained Kamlesh Singh, who belongs to the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), as he was on way to Kolkata, apparently to join the other three rebel ministers who were camping in Gurgaon.

He was detained after reports that he could be switching loyalties to the UPA.

Protesting the police behaviour, Singh said: 'The treatment meted out to me on the directive of the chief minister itself tells the story of the plight of the state. We supported the NDA government for the development of the state. But we are humiliated by the chief minister.'

'When the chief minister has no faith in us, why should we remain ministers? We now find it difficult to work under the leadership of Munda.'

Asked whether he would join the opposition UPA, he said: 'All options are open. We can support any government that will ensure development.'

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) that heads the NDA government swung into action by engaging Human Resource Development Minister Pradeep Yadav to pacify Singh.

When the news came in that the minister was going to join the rebel ministers, the state police swung into action.

The state police first tried to search for the minister in trains bound for Kolkata. Then the roadways were blocked and the minister was finally caught at midnight near Chandil at Jamshedpur. The minister was stopped and taken to a guesthouse located in the same district.

He pleaded with the police that he was he was going to pacify the rebel ministers, but the cops said they had been directed to take

him to a guesthouse.

Reacting to the police action, Singh said: 'They behaved with me as if I was a criminal. They (police) told me that I would not be allowed to go Kolkata.'

'I will complain about the behaviour of police to Union Home Minister Shivraj Patil,' he fumed.

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