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Rajya Sabha Election

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Rajya Sabha bypoll: Gasti's wife among three candidates picked by State BJP

Nirmal Kumar Surana and Shankarappa are the two others recommended by core committee

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The BJP State core committee has recommended the names of three leaders, including the wife of former Rajya Sabha member Ashok Gasti, to the party's central leadership for consideration for ticket to contest the Rajya Sabha byelection. The seat had fallen vacant because of Gasti's death.

The other two leaders recommended are Nirmal Kumar Surana and former

Backward Classes commission chairman Shankarappa.

The 55-year-old Gasti, who had maintained a low profile in the party, shot into the limelight when the BJP central leadership rejected the names recommended by the State core committee and picked him and Eranna Kadadi as the party's candidates for the Rajya Sabha polls. He belonged to a Backward Class community.

But Gasti contracted CO-

VID-19 within two months of getting elected into the Rajya Sabha. He succumbed at a hospital in Bengaluru on September 17. The bypoll is scheduled for December 1.

Ministerial expansion

Meanwhile, the ministerial expansion exercise appears to be gaining focus again with the completion of polling for the biennial elections to the Council and bypolls to two Assembly

seats. Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa on Friday indicated that he would take up the exercise after the announcement of the bypoll results on November 10.

"I am waiting for the results of the bypolls to two Assembly seats [Sira and R.R. Nagar]. I will try to get permission from the central leaders for the ministerial expansion over phone. However, if need be, I will visit New Delhi on November 11 and talk to them," he

told reporters. Sources close to him said that pressure was mounting on him from ministerial aspirants to take up Cabinet expansion, which has been pending for a long time.

At present, there are six vacant berths. However, the number is bound to hit seven as Kannada and Culture Minister C.T. Ravi had submitted his resignation from the post in the wake of the party elevating him as a national general secretary.