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Now, a January date for Cabinet expansion

Five to six ministers may be inducted

BENGALURU, DHNS

The much-delayed expansion of Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa's Cabinet is now being discussed to happen in January.

While sources rule out a Cabinet reshuffle, 5-6 ministers will be inducted as the BJP high command is said to have given its nod, following party general secretary and Karnataka in-charge Arun Singh's visit to the state earlier this month. There are seven Cabinet berths vacant at present.

Pressure has been mounting on the CM to accommodate MLCs M T B Nagaraj and R Shankar, along with recently elected MLA Munirathna among others as ministers.

"Though the high command earlier had plans to change the CM and reshuffle the entire

Cabinet, that plan is currently put on the backburner for lack of alternative leadership options. The Central leadership now feels that changing Yediyurappa could hurt the Lingayat vote bank, which has backed BJP election after election in recent years," one source said.

Moreover, expert maneuvering by the CM to secure his vote bank - announcing Karnataka Veerashaiva Lingayat Development Corporation and proposing inclusion of the Lingayats in the central OBC list - is said to have helped his case, in remaining at the helm of administration.

Yediyurappa will be allowed to go ahead with the Cabinet expansion after gram panchayat polls whose results will be declared on December 30, it is said.

Shah to visit state next month

The BJP top brass may ask Yediyurappa to go for Cabinet rejig only after Union Home Minister Amit Shah's visit to the state next month, reports DHNS from Delhi.

Shah is likely to visit the state on January 15 or 16 to inaugurate training centres of the Central Reserve Police Force in Bhadravathi and Hosapete in the state.

The party is likely to tell the chief minister to go ahead with his plan to rejig his ministry after Shah's

tour, BJP sources said here.

Yediyurappa's son B Y Vijayendra met BJP general secretary (Karnataka in-charge) Arun Singh and held a discussion with him in this regard.

Though what transpired between them is not known, sources in the party said it was a courtesy call by Vijayendra.

Vijayendra briefed Singh about political developments in the state including the ongoing gram panchayat polls.

MLC C P Yogeeshwar and MLAs from Dakshina Kannada, Kodagu districts are expected to make the cut.

"Names of Sullia MLA S Angara, Karkala MLA V Sunil Kumar and Kodagu MLAs KG Bopaiah and Appacchu Ranjan are doing the rounds," party sources said.

The party hoped to address the dissatisfaction over lack of

ministers from a few district which are bastions of the front party.

Central party office-bearers who handle Karnataka affairs have consented for the expansion and have asked Yediyurappa to send a list of names to be inducted as ministers. They are likely to be sworn in during the first or second week of January, sources added.