

~~RS POLLS~~

Mayawati suspends 7 rebel MLAs

NAMITA BAJPAI @ Lucknow

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BUFFETED by rebellion, Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati on Thursday suspended seven party legislators for opposing the official party candidate for the Rajya Sabha polls, holding Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav for the "mischief".

Ramji Gautam is the BSP's official nominee for the RS election. Mayawati decided to pay the SP in kind, for any prospective polls. "We have decided to defeat the SP in future MLC polls no matter whether our votes go to the BJP or any other candidate. Any candidate stronger than the SP's second choice candidate will get our vote."

She alleged Akhilesh had encouraged her party rebels by agreeing to meet them on Wednesday. Having an alliance with the SP in 2019 was her biggest mistake, and so was her decision to withdraw a 1995 case against the SP involving an attack on her, the BSP supremo said.

Mayawati told the media that her party would write to the Assembly Speaker seeking disqualification of the seven rebel MLAs if they switched loyalty.

Four of the seven MLAs had also filed an affidavit for the RS polls, saying their signatures on the nomination of Gautam for were "forged". The returning officer, however, accepted Gautam's nomination for the November 9 polls for the 10 UP Rajya Sabha seats.

The BSP had on Monday fielded Gautam though it did not have the numbers to ensure his victory. Out of the 10 Rajya Sabha seats falling vacant, three were held by the BJP, four by SP, two by BSP and one by Congress.

Mayawati said Akhilesh was toeing the line of his father and would meet the same fate. "We should not have allied with them in haste. We should have given a deep thought to it. We made a wrong decision and made a very big mistake," she said.