

Keshava Rao to dump pink party for Congress

Says he will join Congress tomorrow; asserts he wanted to spend his remaining years of public life in his parent party

IREDDY SRINIVAS REDDY @Hyderabad

IN what should come as a rude jolt to the beleaguered pink party, BRS Parliamentary Party leader and the party's secretary general K Keshava Rao on Thursday confirmed that he is getting ready to do a prodigal son.

He will be dumping the BRS along with his mayor-daughter Gadwal Vijayalaxmi and returning to Congress, his alma mater. They will join the grand old party on March 30 at Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's residence. Keshava Rao's departure from the BRS comes at a time the pink party is fighting a losing battle to retain its leaders.

At the end of an eventful day, Keshava Rao, in a chat with reporters, confirmed his decision to rejoin the Congress. "I will rejoin the Congress on March 30," he said.

Keshava Rao said that he was 84 years old now and wanted to spend his remaining years of

public life in his parent party, the Congress.

However, sources close to him said that the BRS Parliamentary Party leader reportedly had a flaming row with party boss K Chandrasekhar Rao at the latter's farmhouse where he remained unconvinced as the latter kept asking him to stay on at this hour of crisis for the party.

The BRS supreme asked him why he wanted to leave when the BRS had treated him well, giving him a very high position in the party, sending him to Rajya Sabha twice, and making him the parliamentary party leader. But Keshava Rao appears to have remained unmoved.

KCR recalled the lift he had given to his daughter Gadwal Vijayalaxmi, by making her the mayor of a very large city like Hyderabad.

However, Keshava Rao said that he spoke at length with KCR about the problems plaguing the BRS and remedial steps to strengthen the party. "What I



What I spoke with BRS party chief K Chandrasekhar Rao is an internal party matter which I would not reveal in public, suffice to say that I put my points across

K Keshava Rao, BRS secretary general

spoke with KCR is an internal party matter which I would not reveal in public, suffice to say that I put my points across," the veteran leader said.

The "encounter" between KK and KCR had reportedly generated immense heat as the BRS chief probably had thought KK's decision to move on was an act of betrayal. Keshava Rao is un-

derstood to have left in a huff from the farmhouse even as KCR was persuading him to stay with him.

Indrakumar, Arvind Reddy too may desert BRS

After Keshava Rao returned to his Banjara Hills residence, former minister A Indrakumar Reddy and former Mancheril MLA G Arvind Reddy called on him.

The two leaders too are toying with the idea of bidding adieu to the BRS and joining the Congress. According to sources all of them are expected to join the Congress along with Keshava Rao. Keshava Rao's son Vijay Kumar said he was not changing his plumes and that he would remain loyal to the BRS and KCR. He mentioned he has nothing to do with the news doing rounds that Keshava and Vijayalaxmi were leaving the pink party.

Keshava had joined the BRS in May 2013, when he was a Congress Rajya Sabha member. KCR

then sent him to Rajya Sabha in 2014 and again in 2020. His daughter Vijayalaxmi was elected twice as a corporator on the BRS ticket and is now mayor of Hyderabad. Approximately 10 corporators, who owe their allegiance to Vijayalaxmi, are also expected to take the leap of faith along with her. Vijayalaxmi said that her decision to join the Congress would prove to be beneficial to the city as being in the ruling party would help her develop Hyderabad much faster.

As LS elections are drawing closer, Revanth Reddy is implementing a strategy to ensure an increase in his party's footprint by inducting leaders from the BRS.

Knowing fully well that the Congress did not fare well in GHMC elections, he wants to secure the party in the capital so that there would be no electoral blowbacks in Lok Sabha constituencies that are spread across Hyderabad and in the surrounding areas.

Phone-tapping scam stirs up hornet's nest in TS

MANDA RAVINDER REDDY @Hyderabad

WHEN the alleged phone-tapping scam came to light it stirred up a hornet's nest in the political circles in the State.

But with fresh and more shocking revelations emerging by the day, leading to arrest of accused officers, the tapping saga seems to have opened a Pandora's box.

Several political leaders from the Congress and saffron party are now coming forward claiming that their phones too have been tapped during the BRS regime.

In fact, most of these leaders

are approaching the police to file cases.

On Thursday, TPCC spokesperson Bandi Sudhakar Goud and senior leader Tummeti Sammi Reddy wrote letter to Director General of Police (DGP) Ravi Gupta, alleging that their phones were tapped during the 2021 Huzurabad-by-election.

In their letter, the duo complained that the Intelligence officers tapped their phones at the behest of former minister T Harish Rao and sought a thorough probe into the issue. Meanwhile, Nanda Kumar, one of the accused in the alleged cash-for-defection case, also met

the Director General of Police on Thursday and complained that former Intelligence chief T Prabhakar Rao had tapped his phones.

He alleged that after tapping his phones, the then Taskforce Deputy Commissioner of Police (DCP) detained him illegally and urged the DGP to take action against the officers.

Earlier, Forests & Environment and Endowments Minister Konda Surekha also alleged that her phones and those of her husband Konda Murali were tapped during the 2023 Assembly elections. She alleged that BRS

leader and former minister Er-rabelli Dayakar Rao had a role in tapping of their phones.

Judges phones too were tapped: Raghu

BJP leader and former MLA Raghunandan Rao claimed that phones of high court judges, political opponents and businessmen were tapped during the previous BRS government. He demanded that former chief minister KCR and Harish Rao also be named as accused in the phone-tapping case.

Mahabubnagar Congress MLA Yennam Srinivas Reddy made complaint by alleging the phone numbers of politicians.

EXPRESS READ

Bengaluru cafe blast case: NIA arrests key conspirator

Bengaluru: In a major breakthrough in the Bengaluru cafe blast case, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) arrested a key conspirator, Muzammil Shareef. Shareef was reportedly picked up from Bengaluru and placed in custody as a co-conspirator after NIA teams cracked down at 18 locations, including 12 in Karnataka, five in Tamil Nadu and one in Uttar Pradesh, NIA stated in a press release on Thursday. More than nine people were injured when an improvised explosive device concealed in a handbag exploded in the cafe on March 1

Skyroot test-fires stage-2 of Vikram-1 space launch vehicle

AARTI KASHYAP @Hyderabad

CITY-based start-up Skyroot Aerospace successfully test-fired the second stage of the Vikram-1 space launch vehicle, named Kalam-250, at the propulsion testbed of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) at Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) in Sriharikota on Wednesday. Vikram-1 will be India's first rocket vehicle in the private sector, designed and manufactured entirely in India.



The Kalam-250 features a high-strength carbon composite rocket motor using solid fuel and a high-performance ethylene-propylene-diene terpolymers (EPDM) thermal protection system (TPS). The stage includes a carbon ablative flex nozzle along with high-precision electro-mechanical actuators for thrust vector control of the vehicle, aiding in achieving the desired trajectory. This test also received significant support from another ISRO centre, the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC), which provided its proprietary head-mounted safe arm (HMSA) for the test, ensuring the safe operation of the rocket stage.

The second stage of Vikram-1 plays a crucial role in the ascent of the launch vehicle, propelling it from the atmosphere to the deep vacuum of outer space. The test, lasting 85 seconds, recorded a peak sea-level thrust of 186 kilonewtons (kN), which will translate to a fully expanded vacuum thrust of 235 kN during flight.

The stage-2 test follows the Skyroot Aerospace suborbital space launch in November 2022. The third stage of Vikram-1, Kalam-100, was successfully test-fired in June 2021.

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