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Chief Minister B S Yeddyurappa during the Council session in Bengaluru on Tuesday | NAGARAJA GADEKAL

## Land reforms Bill passes Council test with JDS backing

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru <sup>9/12</sup>

AMID stiff opposition by members of the Congress, the controversial Karnataka Land Reforms (Second Amendment) Bill, 2020, was passed in the Legislative Council on Tuesday with the support of JD(S) members.

A lengthy debate over the Bill was held on Monday and Tuesday before it was put to vote. Revenue Minister R Ashoka tabled the Bill in the evening and the Congress members insisted that they don't want a voice vote and demanded for division of votes. When the Bill was put for vote, 37 MLCs, including JD(S) MLCs barring Marithibbegowda, voted in favour while 21 voted against it.

The Bill was passed in the Legislative Assembly in September and was pending before the Council. With the Upper House too passing the Bill now, the decks are cleared for non-agriculturalists to buy agricultural land in the state.

The government had earlier issued an ordinance to repeal Sections 79A (Prohibition on Acquisition of land by certain persons) and 79B (Prohibition of holding agricultural land by certain persons).

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## Land reforms Bill will encourage youth to take up farming: CM

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Earlier in the day, Congress members termed the Bill as "the last nail on the coffin of farmers in the state" and demanded that it should be withdrawn. Chief Minister B S Yeddyurappa said the government will never compromise when it comes to safeguarding the interests of farmers. "The amendment is made to better the lives of farmers. It is intended to help farmers who are in distress and it will also encourage youths to take up farming," he stressed.

Congress members alleged that there was an agenda behind bringing the amendment to help corporate and real estate tycoons and that it will have an adverse impact on the lives of farmers. Leader of the

Opposition S R Patil said that the conscience of the state BJP leaders was not allowing them to introduce the amendments, but they were compelled to do so by their party bosses.

However, Minister Ashoka asserted that there was no agenda behind the Bill except to help farmers. "We discussed the changes with the farmers and they have also agreed. Those who buy agricultural land will have to stick to the original plan. If they have bought it to establish an industry, they should set up an industry. If they deviate from the plan, the land will be taken back from them. We are hoping that agriculture-based industries will come up and it will help farmers and generate jobs for youths in the villages".