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Jarkiholi says 'four
leaders' behind 'fake CD'

Former Minister refuses to name anyone

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The former Minister Ramesh Jarkiholi, who resigned over an alleged "sex-for-favours" scandal last week, on Tuesday claimed that "four leaders" were behind the conspiracy to defame him, but refused to disclose their names.

Mr. Jarkiholi, who came out in the public for the first time after activist Dinesh Kallahalli sought to withdraw his complaint over the issue, claimed that the CD allegedly showing him in a compromising position with a woman was "fake". He claimed to have known about the existence of this CD four months ago, but was ready

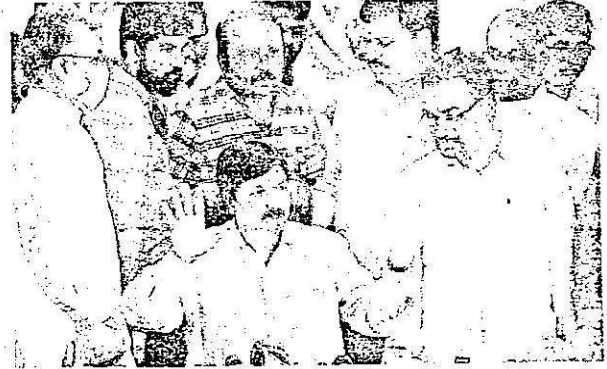
to face the allegation. He had faced a similar challenge, of a "fabricated" audio clip, during elections, he said.

Dropping broad and mysterious hints about who the "four leaders" behind the CD were, he said, "The conspiracy to create this CD was hatched on the fifth floor of a building next to Orion mall in Bengaluru and on the fourth floor of another building near Yeshwantpur police station." He alleged "as far as his information goes", the woman in the CD was paid ₹5 crore and given two flats abroad. He said it was a "conspiracy to defame him personally and not politically".

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The former Minister Ramesh Jarkiholi at a press meet in Bengaluru on Tuesday. *SUDHAKARA JAIN

Mr. Jarkiholi said the former Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy was one of the first to call him after the CD was leaked. "If he had a grudge that I was key in toppling his government, he would not have done that. The Chief Minister and even the high command of the BJP have supported me," he said, adding that he chose to resign on his own. "I have no ene-

mies in the Congress as well," he said. "But a day after I took charge as Minister, a big leader challenged me publicly that I will not last in the department beyond three months. That leader is behind the conspiracy."

Mr. Jarkiholi turned emotional as he said his "family's respect" was at stake and he would fight to preserve that.