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SIT - CD - Issue

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Sex CD case: Govt's SIT decision raises questions

Hasty Step, Say
Ex-Cops; Oppn
Calls It Eyewash

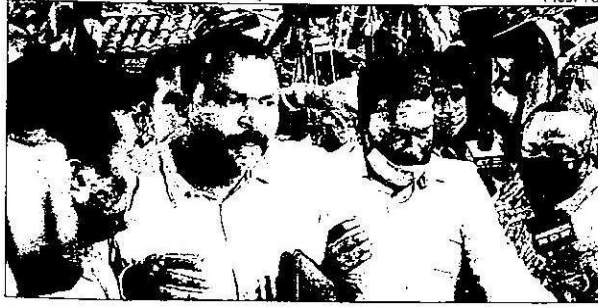
ManuAiyappa.Kanathanda
@timesgroup.com

Bengaluru: The state government's decision to hurriedly order an SIT probe into the sex-tape controversy allegedly involving ex-minister Ramesh Jarkiholi has raised eyebrows, with former IPS officers wondering why police were not asked to complete a basic inquiry first. Some have also questioned the effectiveness of SITs, saying they rarely produce results in high-profile or sensational cases.

POLITICS & POLICY

"The speed with which the government formed the SIT in the Jarkiholi matter is baffling. Before setting up the team, shouldn't have the government given local police time to trace the woman seen in the purported video and interview her?" said a former DG. "If the woman issues a denial, then one can proceed with an SIT probe or other mechanism. But it seems the government has assumed the woman denies the controversy."

Jarkiholi resigned as the water resources minister last week after an activist filed a complaint accusing him of exploiting a woman after promising her a government job. An alleged video of Jarkiholi and the unidentified woman, who has not



CASE TWIST: Activist Dinesh Kallahalli linked Ramesh Jarkiholi to a job-for-sex scandal before withdrawing the complaint

SIT BACK AND WAIT?

● In 2013, government formed an SIT to probe cases related to previous administration after Lokayukta's report. SIT has reportedly given a clean chit to companies that were accused of illegally exporting iron ore. **Findings have not been made public.**

● In 2017, government asked an SIT to probe the killing of senior journalist and activist Gauri Lankesh. **Investigation is still on.**

● In 2019, an SIT began investigating KPL match-fixing scandal. **Investigation is still on.**

● In 2019, an 11-member team was ordered to investigate the IMA scam. Another team was directed to probe last year's violence in east Bengaluru. **Inquiries are still on.**

come forward, also surfaced. He has denied wrongdoing and alleged a conspiracy to tarnish his reputation. No FIR has been filed and recently, the activist withdrew his complaint.

"The formation of the SIT raises more questions than it answers. Is the SIT's objec-

NOTHING WILL COME OUT: HDK

Former chief minister HD Kumaraswamy alleged on Thursday that the government's decision to form an SIT was an eyewash and the real objective was to give a clean chit to Ramesh Jarkiholi. "Nothing will come out of this. The CD may be submitted to the forensic lab and they may say it is fake. My question is against whom will investigators act?" he told reporters. Kumaraswamy said SIT inquiries were ordered in sex scandals allegedly involving politicians in the past. "In almost all cases, they have been cleared. The guilty have not been punished, while innocent people have been jailed in a few cases. It is the system to blame," he said. "I am not soft on Ramesh Jarkiholi, but I believe this kind of politics should not be encouraged."

ive only to determine the authenticity of the video?" said another retired IPS officer, who was part of several important investigations.

The former DG said that SITs were usually set up in cases involving several people. "In this matter, there is only one main person.

Another issue is that no deadline has been set for the probe," he said.

The opposition claims the SIT probe is BJP's attempt to help Jarkiholi quickly clear his name and return to the BS Yediyurappa cabinet. Home minister Basavaraj Bommai rejected the charge. "The government has given complete freedom to the SIT to investigate all the aspects of the case. No time limit has been set; we cannot give a time limit to any inquiry. If the SIT deems it fit, it can file an FIR based on the preliminary inquiry," he said.

Over the years, subsequent governments have constituted SITs to ensure a fair probe in important cases or to buy time and avoid criticism for inaction. In most cases, it is not known if inquiries are completed and reports are submitted.

"High-profile SITs take up huge resources, but after all that government expenditure, little truth comes out. In some cases, the government of the day doesn't make reports public for political reasons," said a senior police officer, who was part of a team probing illegal mining.

SITs take over cases from the local police and get special powers and separate offices, vehicles and staff.

"This particular case, which has created ripples and taken an immediate toll, involves layers of complexities; it's not an open-and-shut case. The SIT probe may unearth some facets of the controversy, but a deeper inquiry, possibly by the CBI, is needed," said political commentator Sandeep Shastri.