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Congress demands filing rape case against Ramesh Jarkiholi

Party begins dharna; seeks High Court CJ-monitored probe into CD scandal

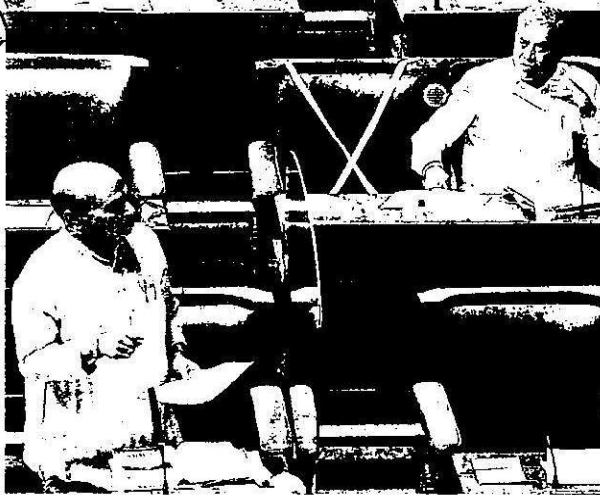
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The Opposition Congress on Monday commenced a dharna in the Legislative Assembly demanding filing of rape case against former Minister Ramesh Jarkiholi. The members also demanded a Karnataka High Court Chief Justice-monitored probe into the CD scandal in which he is accused of sexually exploiting a woman by promising a government job.

"Whatever has happened between Mr. Jarkiholi and the woman is not consensual as the woman in the CD has alleged that she was promised a government job. Hence, this is a rape case," alleged Leader of the Opposition Siddaramaiah, who commenced the discussion on the issue.

He accused the government of being discriminatory with respect to the investigation into the scandal, since the Special Investigation Team was only looking into the "conspiracy" behind the episode as being alleged by Mr. Jarkiholi, ignoring the allegations by the victim.

Referring to the court's



Home Minister Basavaraj Bommai in the Assembly on Monday. *SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

observations regarding the Nirbhaya case, Mr. Siddaramaiah said it was mandatory

on the part of the police to file a case under section 376 of Indian Penal Code especially after the woman herself made a video statement on her being exploited by Mr. Jarkiholi. Taking exception to the police not registering such a case, he demanded that disciplinary action be initiated against them. He accused the government and investi-

gation authorities of ignoring the injustice meted out to the woman.

'Verifying authenticity'

However, in his reply, Home Minister Basavaraj Bommai argued that it was mandatory on the part of the police as per norms to conduct a preliminary investigation to ascertain the authenticity of video before taking up the case. "We are now verifying the authenticity of video. The police will file a rape case after the authenticity of

video is confirmed," he maintained.

Remarking that the woman in the video was "on the run", he said SIT officials had visited six places, including Goa, Delhi, Bhopal, and Belagavi in search of her. She has to co-operate with the probe, he said, and alleged that there were contradictions in her version and that of her family. "She said she was exploited by Mr. Jarkiholi. But if it is true, why will he release the video (of their purported intimate moments) and tarnish his image?" Mr. Bommai wondered.

This irritated the Congress members who tramped into the well of the House, demanding filing of rape case and conducting a court-monitored probe. Expressing dissatisfaction over the Minister's reply, Mr. Siddaramaiah alleged that the government was meting out injustice to the victim and favouring Mr. Jarkiholi.

Speaker Vishweshwar Hegde Kageri adjourned the House for the day as the protesting members shouted slogans and refused to heed repeated requests to return to their seats.

IN THE LEGISLATURE