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CD episode leads to stalemate in Assembly

Congress refuses to withdraw stir till its demand for High Court-monitored probe is accepted

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Stalemate continued in the Legislative Assembly on Tuesday, with the Opposition Congress refusing to withdraw its protest seeking filing of a rape case against former Minister Ramesh Jarkiholi, besides 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. The government remained adamant and refused to budge to the protesting members' demand.

Soon after the House paid tributes to former Minister B.D. Basavaraju, the Congress members rushed to the well of the House and resumed their dharna. They displayed CDs in a symbolic gesture and shouted slogans.

Leader of the Opposition Siddaramaiah, who spearheaded the protest, declared that they would not co-operate with the government as it had not heeded to their demand. Speaker Vishweshwar Hegde Kageri adjourned the House for sometime as the protesters did not heed to



Members of the Opposition Congress protesting in the well of the House during the Assembly session on Tuesday. ■SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

his repeated appeals to withdraw the stir. He held a meeting with members of both ruling and the Opposition parties at his chambers to broker peace.

After the meeting, the Congress slightly modified its stand on the probe. When the House resumed, Mr. Siddaramaiah said: "We are not asking for a judicial probe. Let the Special Investigation

Team (SIT) continue, but the probe should be supervised by a High Court Chief Justice."

IN THE LEGISLATURE

The Congress continued their protest after the House re-assembled post-lunch. Expressing dissatisfaction over this, the Speaker told the protesting members not to stall the House proceedings for settling scores with the government. "If you have

any differences with the government, you can use any forum outside the House. But please do not prevent the House from conducting its business," he said.

Meanwhile, JD(S) members staged a walkout to express their anger over not getting an opportunity to discuss drinking water crisis in the State. Home Minister Basavaraj Bommai launched a counter-attack by reading out a notification issued by

the erstwhile Congress government led by Mr. Siddaramaiah while ordering an inquiry related to a CD scandal involving then Minister H.Y. Meti. "Even this order is similar to what we have issued with respect to Mr. Jarkiholi," he said, accusing the Congress of "double standards". He said the Congress was indulging in "false propaganda".

Taking serious exception to this, Mr. Siddaramaiah accused the government of being stubborn. "The government is trying to protect a person who indulged in rape. The victim is not getting justice. Should we keep quiet?" he asked. "Why are you afraid of the probe being monitored by a HC CJ?" he sought to know.

As there was no sign of protesters withdrawing the dharna, the Speaker took up adoption of two Bills as well as a resolution before adjourning the House for the day. There are indications of the Congress continuing its protest on Wednesday too. Mr. Siddaramaiah said the party wants to take the issue to a logical end.