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19  
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## 'No corruption': Govt says it spent Rs 4,200 cr in Covid fight

**BENGALURU, DHNS:** Medical Education Minister K Sudhakar told the Legislative Assembly on Wednesday that the state government had spent Rs 4,200 crore till date in fighting Covid-19, asserting that there was no corruption during the pandemic.

Sudhakar was replying to a debate on the Covid-19 situation, even as the Opposition Congress staged a walkout as it was "unhappy" with the government's answers.

"So far, 15 departments have incurred expenditure related to Covid-19. Till date, they have spent Rs 4,200 crore. Of this, the health department has spent Rs 1,442 crore," Sudhakar said in his two-hour reply.

The Congress maintained that it wanted a judicial probe into alleged corruption in the procurement of Covid-19 equipment.

"These allegations are baseless, false and far from the truth. Either deliberately or otherwise, the government hasn't allowed corruption," Sudhakar said.

"We are at war. There is uncertainty over vaccination and we are still trying to understand the behaviour pattern of this virus," Sudhakar said. "It was an emergency situation. Can we stick to procedure when lives have to be saved," he asked on allegations that the government procured equipment at higher rates.

The minister said the cost of each PPE kit in April was Rs 1,444, which came down to Rs 575 in July. "Similarly, one N-95 mask cost Rs 147 in March and Rs 44 in July," he



Minister K Sudhakar

in the process, including one for price fixation."

On several occasions, Congress members interrupted Sudhakar to refute the government's claims. For instance, when Sudhakar said the government arranged "free transport" for migrant workers, he faced pushback.

"Before Covid-19, there were about 7,000 oxygen beds. Today, we have 28,140 beds and it will be 31,000 by October," Sudhakar said, adding that there was no shortage of oxygen. "Little was done to improve the healthcare sector in the last 73 years."

On the procurement of ventilators, he said the ones Tamil Nadu got for Rs 4 lakh were those used in ambulances. "A ventilator has 56 specifications. We have procured those that can be used in ICUs."

Leader of the Opposition Siddaramaiah asked how the Centre procured ventilators at Rs 4 lakh. "So, did the Centre procure low-quality ventilators? Also, isn't it a fact that your own doctors protested against poor PPE kits procured by a Maharashtra company called Plastisurge? Prima facie,