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Bill to create new varsities stalled in Assembly

Let's first improve existing universities: Opposition

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BENGALURU, DHNS

The Legislative Assembly on Friday stalled the passage of a Bill to create three new universities in the state after legislators, cutting across party lines, said this would lead to "wasteful" expenditure.

The Karnataka State Universities and Certain Other Law (Amendment) Bill proposes to upgrade Bengaluru's Government Science College as Nrupathunga

University, create the Maharani Cluster University and make the government college in Mandya as Mandya University.

Law Minister J C Madhuswamy, who piloted the Bill in the absence of Deputy Chief Minister C N Ashwath Narayan, said it was in line with a decision that was taken by the previous Congress government and the new universities were already approved under the Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA).

"I don't know how the Finance Department permitted this," Leader of the Opposition Siddaramaiah said. "At a time when we're talking about reducing wasteful and unwanted expenditure, do we need new universities? Let's first improve the existing universities," he said.

Madhuswamy quickly clar-

ified that the Bill was readied when the Siddaramaiah-led Congress government was in power. "So what? Nothing stops you from dropping it," Siddaramaiah said.

Former Congress minister Krishna Byre Gowda said the idea of creating these new universities was based on a one-time grant of Rs 50 crore that the University Grants Commission (UGC) offered. "A clause to get this grant is that the institution should be upgraded as a university. To get a one-time grant of Rs 50 crore, we'll end up spending a lot more every year," he said.

BJP's Aravind Limbavali and Veeranna Charantimath also opposed the Bill. While Charantimath said the Bill had lost its relevance in the wake of the National Education Policy, Limbavali said: "We've not been able to provide in-

frastructure to the new Bangalore North University and Bangalore Central University. What is the necessity to create a new university?"

Shivajinagar MLA Rizwan Arshad (Congress) said it would take ten years to convert the Government Science College into a full-fledged university.

"There aren't people to even clean the college. It'll be enough if the government could give grants to develop the college," he said.

Madhuswamy made a vain attempt to push for the Bill. "The idea is to ensure quality. We're already paying salaries and other bills of these colleges. It won't cost much," he said, adding this Bill was to replace an ordinance already promulgated. Finally, Speaker Vishweshwar Hegde Kageri said the Bill would be kept pending.