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MONSOON SESSION

# Land reforms Bill gets stuck in Council

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
@ Bengaluru

AMID stiff protest, slogan-eering and a walk-out by the opposition Congress, the much-debated Karnataka Land Reforms Amendment Bill, which allows non-agriculturalists to buy farm land in the state, was passed in the Assembly on Saturday.

The Bill, however, was debated at length in the Council past midnight on Sunday before the House was finally adjourned at 12.58 am. The combined opposition of the Congress and the JDS, with more numbers than the ruling BJP, was insisting that the government withdraw Bill to protect the interests of farmers.

BJP MLC and party state general secretary N Ravi Kumar said, "We were confident that the Bill would be passed but the Chairman adjourned the House abruptly when the issue was being debated. The conduct of the Chairman raised questions," he said.

Though the Bill can be taken up only when the Council meets next, the ordinance on land reforms will continue to be in force, sources explained.

Earlier on Saturday, Revenue Minister R Ashoka, who steered the amendment Bill in the Assembly amid a



Farmers, who are protesting against the passage of the Karnataka Land Reforms Act and the farm Bills in Parliament, being taken into protective custody at Murya Circle in Bengaluru on Friday | SHRIRAM B N

scathing attack from the opposition which termed it a 'death knell' for the farm sector, specially the small and marginal farmers, said the provisions of the Act which restricted non-agriculturalists from purchasing agricultural land in the state were used by officers to harass people and were not helping farmers in any way.

The amendment, which has been strongly opposed by farmers' associations across the state, provides for removal of restriction on purchasing agricultural land and on its use for agricultural purposes only.

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## What the changes to the law means

- There will be no restriction on non-agriculturalists from purchasing agriculture land.
- Land prices may go up, especially around Bengaluru. Seen as an attempt to attract investment by simplifying the process
- Cases booked for violation of the old provisions will now be abated.

## EXPERT'S TAKE

The changes in the Act are not in the interests of farmers, especially small and marginal farmers, who will end up as migrant workers in cities. People from urban areas, or those who have money, but are not cultivators, will buy land for speculation purposes or for purposes other than agriculture. We are likely to see lesser land being cultivated soon  
— Prof R S Deshpande, former director, Institute for Social and Economic Change

## Govt red-faced as Labour Bill fails to make it through Upper House

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ Bengaluru

IN an embarrassment to the ruling dispensation, the Labour Law (amendment) Bill which was passed in the Assembly, was not cleared by the Upper House on Saturday, the last day of the monsoon legislature session. The ordinance replacement Bill, which stressed on increasing the working hours of employees, was passed in the Assembly on Friday. On Saturday, when it was taken up in the Council, the Congress and JD(S), which together, have more numbers, defeated the bill. While 26 members voted against the bill, only 14 voted for it.

Sources said the Bill will now have to be sent back to the Assembly for ratification. But since the Assembly has been adjourned *sine die*, the government has the option of incorporating the Opposition's demands and putting it to vote again or issue a fresh ordinance.

INT. C. VERMA