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## Forward from Nirani's phone triggers controversy

BJP leader claims message about Hindu gods was sent inadvertently by his PA

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
BENGALURU

After a WhatsApp message forwarded from his mobile phone raked up a controversy, Bharatiya Janata Party MLA and former Minister Murugesh Nirani issued a public apology on Tuesday by claiming that it was an "inadvertent forward" and happened when his phone was with his personal assistant.

The forwarded message reportedly had comments on Hindu gods and goddesses.

This led to public criticism and several leaders, including former Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, took exception to it.

In a press release, Mr. Nirani clarified that the phone belonged to him and as it was used for public contact, his gunman and personal assistant had used it. "Yesterday night, the phone was with my PA and a message sent to my public contact number was inadvertently forwarded by him. He has already apologised to me for his mistake.

Those who are with me have not forwarded the message deliberately. I apologise to the people of the State for the mistake," he said the release.

### 'I am tolerant'

The former Minister went on to explain that being tolerant of all religions, he would never speak lightly of any religion and faith. "I respect all religions equally. I follow 'Sanatan Dharma' religiously. Being a Hindu, I am proud of my

religion. The people of the State should not think otherwise. Please pardon the mistake of my personal staff," Mr. Nirani said.

He also appealed to people not to take the issue forward and create a controversy.