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No deadline set for SIT: Bommai

'It has been asked to complete probe at the earliest'

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

The government has not set any deadline to the Special Investigation Team that is going into the CD scandal allegedly involving the former Minister Ramesh Jarkiholi.

"We asked for completion of the probe at the earliest and submission of the report," Home Minister Basavaraj Bommai said here on Thursday.

The probe would focus on the people who were behind the making of the CD, that showed the former Minister in a compromising position with a woman, and their motives, he said, adding that



Basavaraj Bommai

the police would have complete freedom to look at all the angles. Mr. Bommai said that since the earlier petition filed in Cubbon Park a week ago, alleging that Mr. Jarki-

holi had exploited a woman promising her a job, was withdrawn, the probe was based on the petition filed by Mr. Jarkiholi. Based on the findings, the future course of action about filing the FIR in this case would be decided, he added.

Meanwhile, the SIT formed a team involving the Cubbon Park police and the CCB officials, who worked on this case earlier. The officials have been summoned by Additional Commissioner of Police, Soumendu Mukherjee, to get the update on the case.

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SIT's terms of reference raise eyebrows

'Why does it probe only conspiracy angle and not allegations of misuse of power?'

RISHIKESH BAHADUR DESAI
BELAGAVI

The State government's move to appoint a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to probe the "conspiracy" angle to the Ramesh Jarkiholi CD scandal and not whether the women in question was a victim of oppression has come under fire from women's organisations.

That the SIT was constituted following a letter by Mr. Jarkiholi to Basavaraj Bommai, Home Minister, and not after a formal complaint by the former Minister, is also being questioned.

Unfair to woman

"The government and the media have both been unfair to the woman in question," said Jayashree Gurannanavar, farmers' leader and former State secretary of Dalit Mahila Okkoota. "The government is only interested



Ramesh Jarkiholi

in protecting the reputation of the Minister, while the media is investigating the woman's identity and the reasons behind her visiting the leader frequently. No one is interested in finding out if the former Minister misused his powerful position or not," she said.

K. Neela, State unit vice-president of Akhil Bharatiya Janwadi Mahila Sanghatane, said she is not in the least surprised by the State go-

vernment's act given the "predictable patriarchal mindset". "In all cases of alleged sexual harassment, it is presumed that the woman is wrong. It sends out the message that the government is trying to protect Mr. Jarkiholi and not the woman," she said.

Creating a narrative where women are the villains and not victims, in defiance of the Constitution, is the template set in States like Uttar Pradesh, she said. "Karnataka is quick in following the template," she added.

'Clearly wrong'

Human rights' lawyer Bheemanagouda Paragonda argued that in setting up the SIT, the government had already accepted that there is "political conspiracy" behind the incident.

Secondly, it had deliberately reduced the terms of

reference of the investigation, keeping the leader in mind, he said. "This is likely to make the public believe that the woman victim was part of the conspiracy. This is clearly wrong as per earlier legal precedents," he said.

Limited scope

Former police officers feel the scope of the SIT is limited. "It is clear that the government is trying to cater to political exigencies and not to take the case to a logical end," said a former Director General of Police, who has served as a member of similar SITs.

"SITs are formed to reduce the burden on the jurisdictional police of a specific case that requires technical know how or an investigation that has to be done in a time-bound manner. But in this case, it seems the go-

vernment has political motives behind the setting up of this SIT with pre-determined terms of references. Any SIT, if it has to bring out the truth, has to look into all corners of a case. It is not a pre-programmed robot that probes only a few limited angles of an alleged offence. If that does not happen, then the constitution of the SIT is not justified," he said.

Another former DIG, who did not wish to be named, also argued that the terms of reference should have been broad-based and comprehensive to unearth the truth. He said that even a good police officer's work can be limited by the terms of reference.

"The current terms of reference are definitely not aimed at bringing out the whole truth about the case, nor at ensuring gender justice," he said.