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Monogamy challenge leaves legislators fuming

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Health and Medical Education Minister K. Sudhakar stirred up a hornets' nest on Wednesday by throwing an open challenge to all the 225 MLAs of the State to subject themselves to an inquiry to know who among them had

extra-marital relationships. This drew criticism from not only the Congress but also several of his own party members.

Dr. Sudhakar, who had earlier come under fire from the Opposition for obtaining an injunction against publishing any objectionable

video involving him and five other Ministers, told reporters: "This is an open challenge from me to those who think that they are *Sathya Harishchandras*. Let all the 225 of us face an inquiry.... It is the question of morality and values. Let the people of the State know if they have

any illicit relationship and extra-marital affairs."

He took the names of K.R. Ramesh Kumar, V. Muniyappa, D.K. Shivakumar, Siddaramaiah (Congress leaders) and H.D. Kumaraswamy (JD-S leader).

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Sudhakar's monogamy challenge leaves legislators seething with rage

He asked if they were all models for society and were monogamous.

The Minister's statement left members fuming in the Legislative Assembly, with Mr. Siddaramaiah and R.V. Deshpande (Congress) demanding that he should apologise or the Chief Minister should drop him immediately. They described it as a breach of privilege of all the MLAs as well as the House.

Declaring that the Congress was ready to accept the challenge, Mr. Siddaramaiah said his party would demand a Karnataka High Court-monitored probe into the "issue of morality" as demanded by Dr. Sudhakar. The party also wrote to

Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa in this regard. "Let the High Court Chief Justice also look into the issue suggested by Dr. Sudhakar along with our earlier demand for probing the CD scandal involving the former Minister Ramesh Jarkiholi in which he is accused of sexually exploiting a woman by promising a job and the episode of six Ministers, including Dr. Sudhakar, obtaining injunction against publishing of any objectionable videos involving them," he said.

Speaker Vishweshwar Hegde Kageri also took exception to such remarks by a member of the House. "Nobody should express their views in such a way

that would hurt or affect the dignity of the House as well as its members... As the custodian of this House, I am equally pained. It is my prime responsibility to protect the dignity of the House," he said.

After his remarks created a furore, Dr. Sudhakar issued a clarification, maintaining that his statement had been misinterpreted. "I regret if it has hurt anyone," he said. "No one bothered when Congress deliberately tried to defame and indulge in character assassination of six Ministers (who have obtained injunction). But my statement on asking them to introspect has hurt some people," Dr. Sudhakar added.