

## It's no sin, says Gowda Jr of talks on selling MLC seat

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BANGALORE: Unfazed by the controversy over an audio CD about him purportedly discussing about cash-for-seat with the supporters of an MLC seat aspirant, JDS leader and former chief minister H D Kumaraswamy on Sunday defended himself, saying it had been blown out of proportion as if he had "committed a sin".

As he remained in the eye of a storm facing strong criticism over his purported remarks, Kumaraswamy said there was nothing that corroborated that he had been paid any money.

He said, "In this case I have explained internal party realities with my party workers. It has been blown out of proportion as though I have committed a sin. There is nothing that corroborates that some one has paid any money..." he said.

Kumaraswamy's defence drew flak from both Congress and BJP. Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah said Kumaraswamy could not defend himself claiming other parties were also indulging in corruption.

Kumaraswamy is at the vortex of a controversy after Saturday's release of an audio CD about him purportedly telling the supporters of MLC seat aspirant Vijugowda Patil, a JDS leader from Bijapur district, about the demand for money from his party MLAs.

In the clips played on Kannada TV channels, Kumaraswamy, son of former PM H D Deve Gowda, was heard telling the supporters of Patil, "Each MLA (of JDS) is asking for one crore. They are saying you make anybody the MLC..." At another point, Kumaraswamy was heard saying, "40 people (JDS MLAs) are asking for 40 crore... This is my fate."

Hitting out at Kumaraswamy, Siddaramaiah said "Whoever has done... mistake is a mistake. Corruption is corruption. If he (Kumaraswamy) says other parties are also doing it, it is not a defence at all."

Asked about the allegations that all parties are involved in such scandals, Siddaramaiah said, "If a cat drinks the milk closing its eyes, it doesn't mean that the entire world is not watching it drink the milk."

Union minister Ananth Kumar demanded a probe into the controversy and said the guilty should be punished. "Whoever is guilty, after a thorough probe, he should be punished," he said.

On Kumaraswamy's assertion that all parties were committing the same electoral crime, he said it is very unfortunate that the former chief minister is saying so.

However, Brushing aside the attacks, Kumaraswamy said he enjoyed full confidence of his MLAs and party leaders. "...they openly discuss all their difficulties with me."

After the controversy erupted on Saturday, Kumaraswamy did not disown the authenticity of the

