

Kashmir MP accuses speaker of involvement in sex scam

A Congress MP from Jammu and Kashmir has alleged that assembly Speaker Tara Chand and former state party president Peerzada Muhammad Sayeed were involved in a sex scandal that came to light last year, but the state government has denied the charge.

Madan Lal Sharma, who represents the Jammu constituency, said at a public rally in a village near Akhnoor Sunday that Tara Chand, a Congress legislator from Khour, and Sayeed were involved in the sex scandal but were 'saved by (party president) Sonia Gandhi at the behest of Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad.'

Sharma said Azad had pleaded with Gandhi to 'intervene and save the party from embarrassment'. He said the chief minister had also told her that 'the arrest of the speaker would lead to a crisis'.

In his public speech, he also said Tara Chand and Sayeed should be jailed.

Tara Chand, talking to media persons, denied the accusations. 'The final decision rests with the party high command which should take cognizance of such baseless utterances,' he said, adding: 'Everybody knows my image.'

A state government spokesman said in a statement that the allegation made by Sharma 'was utterly baseless, false and without any foundation' and there was no question of 'the government trying to protect any accused in the scandal'.

The sex scam had created an uproar across the state in October. Some ministers, top police and paramilitary officials and bureaucrats were accused of involvement in it.

Ghulam Ahmad Mir, a former Congress minister and legislator of the Dooru constituency, was arrested from the Jammu and Kashmir House in New Delhi, while independent legislator Raman Mattoo was arrested in Srinagar.

Both were later released on bail by a court in Chandigarh. However, Jammu and Kashmir High Court later pulled up the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) for tardy investigation and observed that some people were not questioned or arrested though they were named by some of the girls who were pushed into prostitution.

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