

BJP candidate absconding after poll-eve violence in Bellary

Former Karnataka minister B. Sriramulu of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) went missing Thursday after allegedly assaulting a Congress worker on the eve of voting in the politically volatile and iron ore-rich Bellary district, a police official said.

'He is absconding and search is on,' Bellary police superintendent Amrut Pal told IANS on telephone.

A complaint has been registered against Sriramulu, who is the BJP candidate for the Bellary seat (reserved for Scheduled Tribes) and some of his supporters for seriously injuring a Congress worker earlier in the day in Gandhinagar area of Bellary city.

The Congress activist suffered head injuries and was being treated in a Bellary hospital.

Bellary is among the 10 districts where voting will take place Friday for 66 seats of the 224-member assembly.

Pal said a police team rushed to the spot on receiving information about the assault but Sriramulu and his supporters fled from the spot.

Pal said G. Janardhana Reddy, a rich mine owner and BJP member of the legislative council, who was at the spot, was taken to the police station and questioned about the incident.

'Reddy was let off after questioning. He was not arrested,' Pal said.

'The situation is peaceful and we do not expect any trouble Friday,' he said.

The state's Chief Electoral Officer M.N. Vidyashankar told reporters in [Bangalore](#) that the situation was normal in Bellary and he was confident Friday's voting would pass off without any incident.

'I am in constant touch with police officials in Bellary and things are normal,' he said.

Sriramulu, who is close to the family of Janardhana Reddy, had last year landed the BJP-Janata Dal-Secular coalition government in Karnataka in serious trouble by accusing then chief minister H.D. Kumaraswamy of attempting to murder him during the campaign for civic polls.

To save the coalition, BJP had forced him to form the ministry. He held the tourism portfolio.

Janardhana Reddy was also suspended from BJP for a short while for his repeated charges that Kumaraswamy had received Rs.1.5 billion in bribes to allow illegal iron ore mining in Bellary district.

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