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Phone linked to Siddaramaiah 'sting' video taken to Kumaraswamy's Delhi residence: Police

NEW DELHI – 2 Nov, 2026 The phone is suspected to have been used to upload a video targeting former Karnataka chief minister Siddaramaiah.

A mobile phone allegedly bought on the instructions of a Janata Dal (Secular) social media operative was taken to Union minister HD Kumaraswamy's official residence in New Delhi and handed to another aide, Bengaluru police commissioner Seemant Kumar Singh said on Sunday. The phone is suspected to have been used to upload a video targeting former Karnataka chief minister Siddaramaiah. Police are examining the account of an arrested accused, Ritesh Pandey, to establish who arranged the purchase and how the device was used to circulate the footage.

Pandey, a Delhi-based freelance social media content creator, was arrested on October 24 and subsequently granted conditional bail by a Bengaluru court.

Singh said Pandey had told investigators that he and another associate, Vinod Sharma, bought the handset from a mobile phone shop in Delhi's Karol Bagh area on the instructions of Prajwal Prasad, a media consultant associated with Kumaraswamy's office. The two then went to the minister's residence on Kushak Road and handed the phone to Prasad, who was present there, he said.

"Ritesh disclosed in his statement that, on the instructions of Prajwal Prasad, he accompanied another associate, Vinod Sharma, to a mobile shop in Delhi's Karol Bagh area and purchased a handset," Singh said.

The commissioner said all three were associated with the social media team operating from the minister's office. Police are examining CCTV footage from the shop, financial transactions between Pandey and Prasad, and other digital records to verify the account.

Singh said Pandey had repeatedly named Prasad when asked who had instructed him to buy the phone. Investigators, however, were yet to independently establish the claims. "We are currently verifying all the statements and technical facts. The veracity of these claims will be confirmed once the remaining accused are apprehended and interrogated," he said.

Police have issued notices to Prasad and Sharma. Singh said neither had responded to the latest notices and that investigators had information they had sought anticipatory bail. "They have not replied to our notices, and according to our information, they have moved for anticipatory bail," Singh said. "Crucial progress in this investigation can only take place once both individuals are secured and interrogated."

Police trace video's movement from pen drive to YouTube

The investigation is seeking to establish how the video moved from its original source to the people who uploaded and circulated it. Police have identified a mobile phone associated with the video's upload to YouTube. Investigators said the footage was first transferred to Pandey on a pen drive and then moved to a handset for uploading.

The phone allegedly used to record the original footage is a separate device. Police have recovered it and sent it for forensic examination.

Investigators have said Pandey told them that he uploaded the video on the instructions of a person associated with the JD(S) social media team.

The video appeared on a social media account named Karnataka Honey Trap on September 27. It was later circulated on YouTube and X, and carried by some Kannada television channels. Siddaramaiah filed a police complaint

on October 6 over its circulation.

The Central Crime Branch is investigating the recording, its transfer and its publication online. Police have questioned Power TV managing director Rakesh Shetty and Congress leader Kripa Alva in connection with the video's origins. Prasad is among those being investigated.

Kumaraswamy said that Karnataka Police has not searched or inspected his official residence in Delhi or prepared a mahazar there as part of the investigation. He accused the state government of allowing misinformation to circulate to divert public attention from the sting video and use the media for political point scoring.

Kumaraswamy demanded accountability if any department, investigative agency or minister had supplied false information to the press.

“The Karnataka State Government must take full accountability for the spread of this misinformation. If any department, investigative agency, or minister has leaked such false information to the press, those responsible must be exposed and held accountable,” he said.