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SC strips Manipur Minister of his office

Bans him from entering the Assembly

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In an extraordinary display of its constitutional powers, the Supreme Court on Wednesday stripped Manipur Cabinet Minister T. Shyamkumar, who is facing disqualification proceedings for defection, of his office and banned him from entering the Assembly with immediate effect.

"Given the extraordinary facts in the present case, we are constrained to use our powers under Article 142 of the Constitution. Respondent No. 3 [Mr. Shyamkumar] is restrained from entering the Legislative Assembly till further orders of this Court. Needless to add, he will cease to be a Minister of the Cabinet immediately," a Bench led by Jus-

tice Rohinton Nariman ordered.

The court agreed to take up the case again on March 30.

On January 21, the Bench had given the Speaker a month's time to decide on the disqualification of Mr. Shyamkumar under the anti-defection law for switching sides to the BJP after contesting on Congress ticket.

However, despite the judgment, the Speaker had returned to the apex court seeking eight weeks to take a decision.

On March 18, the Speaker asked for 10 days' time and said the decision on the disqualification would come on March 28. However, the apex court refused the plea and issued the order.