

ಪತ್ರಿಕಾ ತುಣುಕುಗಳು
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Supreme Court orders M.P. floor test today

KRISHNADAS RAJAGOPAL
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court ordered a floor test in the Madhya Pradesh Assembly on March 20, agreeing that uncertainty over whether the Kamal Nath-led Congress government enjoys the confidence of the House cannot go on for even another day.

A Bench of Justices D.Y. Chandrachud and Hemant Gupta overrode a decision by Speaker N.P. Prajapati to

adjourn the session to March 26. Justice Chandrachud remarked that a floor test was best before the politics got any murkier.

"The state of uncertainty in Madhya Pradesh must be effectively resolved by issuing a direction for convening a floor test... The session of the Legislative Assembly which has been deferred to March 26 shall be reconvened on March 20," the court said in a short order.

It agreed with Governor Lalji Tandon that every day of delay in conducting the floor test would be a win for horse-trading. "Yes, the Governor cannot have a *carte blanche* to destabilise governments. But, equally, there is a modicum of authority with the Governor to call for a floor test," Justice Chandrachud said.

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Resignation of 16 MLAs accepted

SIDHARTH YADAV
BHOPAL

Speaker N.P. Prajapati on Thursday night accepted the resignation of 16 rebel Congress MLAs staying in Bengaluru. With this, the effective strength of the Assembly is down to 206. The Congress will need 104 votes to stay in power.

SC orders floor test in Madhya Pradesh today

The two judges heard the submissions beyond court hours on Thursday and reserved the case at 5 p.m. They reassembled after an hour of discussion in their chambers.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, for the BJP, called the Speaker's decision on March 16 to adjourn the session because of COVID-19 a "humbug". "It was a budget session. It was regarding the finance of the State. It was adjourned even as the whole House was assembled for the session. Apparently, they discovered that coronavirus has come only at 12 o'clock that day!" Mr. Rohatgi said. Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, for Mr. Kamal Nath, said the BJP "manufactured my minority". Senior advocate A.M. Singhvi, for the Speaker, questioned how the Governor could call for a floor test when the

Speaker was yet to decide on the resignation of the 16 "runaway" legislators. He sought two weeks, but the court declined.

With this order, the court has made it clear that the conduct of a floor test would not be dependent on the Speaker's decision on the resignation of the 16 'rebel' MLAs.

If the Kamal Nath government loses the floor test, any disqualification proceedings against the 16 MLAs for defection may become virtually defunct.

The session on March 20 would be on the "single-point agenda" of whether the Chief Minister commands a majority. The voting would be held by a "show of hands". The floor test would be videographed and, if possible, telecast live. The floor test should be completed by 5 p.m.