

Two Ministers incited Council chaos: report

Panel condemns Ashwath Narayan and J.C. Madhuswamy

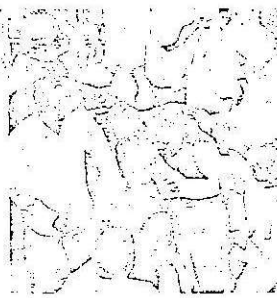
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
BENGALURU

Blaming Deputy Chief Minister C.N. Ashwath Narayan and Minor Irrigation Minister J.C. Madhuswamy for the pandemonium in the Legislative Council on December 15, 2020, a three-member House Committee, headed by Marithibbe Gowda, in its interim report has recommended the barring of several members, belonging to various parties, from participating in House proceedings for a period ranging from one to two sessions.

Condemning the behaviour of two senior Ministers on that day, the committee, whose report was tabled in the House on Friday, has pinned the blame on them for inciting the chaos. It also stated that it was not proper for them to hold any government post. The committee has also recommended barring another Minister, Kota Srinivas Poojary, for two legislative sessions and felt that he, too, should not discharge any responsible position in the government. It has identified Mr. Poojary for inciting Arun Shahapur.

Congress members, including Opposition chief whip M. Narayanaswamy, Nazeer Ahmed, Srinivas V. Mane, and Prakash K. Rathod, have been recommended for being barred from one legislative session for physically dragging S.L. Dharme Gowda and kicking the door that had been closed by ruling party members. Congress member Chandrashekar B. Patil, who sat on the chair during the fracas, has also been recommended for a one-session ban.

The House committee was formed to probe the chaos in the Legislative Council during the winter session after the ruling BJP members seated the then Deputy Chairman – the late Dharme Gowda – on the chair even before the quorum bell had stopped ring-



The bedlam in the Legislative Council on December 15, 2020.

IN THE LEGISLATURE

ing. Dharme Gowda was physically pulled out of the chair by Congress members, even as the ruling BJP members pushed him back. The ruling party members had closed the door to prevent the entry of Chairman K. Prathapachandra Shetty, against whom they had moved a no-confidence motion that was rejected.

After watching visuals of the events and hearing the accounts of marshals and others, the committee has sought an inquiry by a retired High Court judge on the lapses committed by Le-

gislative Council Secretary K.R. Mahalakshmi, besides keeping her out of the session till the committee gave its final recommendation. The committee felt that the Secretary had failed to discharge her duties according to the rules. The report has recommended the dropping of charges against Dharme Gowda since he is now deceased.

Mr. Shetty had formed a five-member committee to go into the unprecedented chaos in the Upper House. However, the two BJP members – A.H. Vishwanath and S.V. Sankanur – withdrew, leaving Congress members B.K. Hariprasad and R.B. Thimmapur in the panel, besides Mr. Marithibbe Gowda of the JD(S).

BJP's stand

While BJP Ministers have indicated that the State government will not acknowledge the report for its lack of legal sanctity, the report cites the Additional Law Secretary who has termed the committee legally set up by the Chairman using residuary powers under Rule 342.

Horatti, Pranesh blamed

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Newly elected Deputy Chairman of the Council, M.K. Pranesh, has also been blamed for playing a part in the December 15, 2020, chaos and closing the door through which the Chairman usually enters the Council hall. Terming this "unparliamentary behaviour", the panel has recommended that he be barred from two legislative sessions.

Janata Dal (S) member Basavaraj Horatti, the most senior member of the House who is also

tipped to replace Chairman K.

Prathapachandra Shetty, has been accused of "making the Deputy Chairman sit in the chair in violation of the House rules". He has also been identified to have asked the members who surrounded the chair to move out so that proceedings could start with the Deputy Chairman in the chair. The committee has recommended that he, along with members K.T. Srikantegowda and Govindaraj, be barred for two sessions.