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# PAC chief mulls privilege motion against Speaker

## Panel had sought a report on corruption in health dept

31/5/20

**BENGALURU, DHNS**  
**I**n what could be an unprecedented crisis in the Karnataka Legislature, the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) is considering moving a privilege motion against Assembly Speaker Vishweshwar Hegde Kageri for "stalling" an inquiry into alleged corruption in procurement of Covid-19 equipment.

The PAC headed by senior Congress legislator H K Patil had sought a report from the Health department over complaints of corruption in procurement of various devices and protective equipment to fight the Covid-19 crisis.

On May 28, the Committee was also slated to visit various quarantine shelters, Covid-19 hospitals and the Health department to verify the facilities and safety measures provided to frontline staff.

However, Kageri's office issued an order May 27 barring House committees from taking up any field visits or meetings with officials in view of the Covid-19 pandemic. This,



Vishweshwar Hegde Kageri

Patil charged, obstructed the Constitutional duty of the PAC to look into complaints on misuse of public money.

"The question is, should we or should we not move a privilege motion. This will be decided in the (PAC) meeting

on June 2," Patil told reporters. Objecting to the Speaker's notice, Patil pointed out there had not been any obstruction to the PAC's functioning till now. "But this is the first time there's an obstruction."

The Speaker's order came in the way of duties that the legislature is supposed to perform. "The PAC has not been allowed to take up inspection in connection with alleged irregularities. This amounts to breach of our duty and freedom," Patil said.

The equipment in question were procured by Karnataka Drug Logistics and Warehousing Corporation over the past couple of months, when India was under lockdown. Complaints received by the PAC claim that some safety equipment were procured at triple the cost in the market, while

others say that the quality of procurement was low.

"How much money has been spent on ventilators? At what cost were masks and sanitisers purchased? This must be made public," Patil said, daring Health and Family Welfare Minister B S Sriramulu.

Assembly Secretary M K Vishalakshi issued a clarification that all House committees had been restricted keeping the Covid-19 pandemic in mind. "Keeping the central and state guidelines in mind, House committee meetings were suspended temporarily. Likewise, all field inspections were also restricted from a health point of view. There's no ulterior motive behind this. The restrictions will be revised based on further lockdown guidelines issued by the government," she said.