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RS says 'no' to joining virtual meeting of House panel

'It is most unfortunate,' says panel chairman Anand Sharma

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The Rajya Sabha Secretariat has denied permission for members of the Standing Committee on Home Affairs to join a meeting of the panel through videoconference.

The same was conveyed to committee chairperson and Congress leader Anand Sharma by the office of House Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu.

The meeting, scheduled for June 3, is slated to discuss the "situation arising out of the lockdown due to the COVID-19 outbreak and its handling by the Ministry".

Mr. Sharma told *The Hindu*, "It is most unfortunate. If the Prime Minister of India can have summits with leader of other countries, with Chief Ministers via videoconference, if the Rajasthan As-



Anand Sharma

sembly could have a virtual session, then why not allow the Indian Parliamentarians to use it? After all we are supposed to be an IT [information Technology] super power."

DMK MP and former IT Minister Dayanidhi Maran, a member of the panel, has written a letter to Mr. Sharma expressing concern over members being asked to travel to Delhi to attend the meeting.

"If I travel to Delhi, not only would I be exposing

myself to the COVID-19 virus, but I would also be forced to enter into quarantine or isolation for a 14-day period on return to Chennai as per the current SOP, which would affect my parliamentary duties in my constituency," he wrote.

A call will be taken on Monday, after speaking to all the members, whether to hold a meeting as scheduled or not, Mr. Sharma said.

Sources said both Houses were exploring the possibility of using videoconference. The rules dictated that parliamentary committee meetings were confidential.

The reason videoconference meetings were not being allowed was because it violated the principle of confidentiality, as there was no guarantee of a member sitting alone at such events, the sources said.