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Jairam urges Venkaiah to conduct panel meet online

Congress leader says it can be held via videoconference

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In a renewed demand for holding meetings of parliamentary standing committees through videoconference, Chairman of the Standing Committee on Science and Technology and Congress leader Jairam Ramesh wrote to Rajya Sabha Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu asking for a virtual sitting of the committee.

The committee on Petroleum, headed by BJP MP Ramesh Bhiduri, met on Tuesday.

The panel on Science and Technology is scheduled to hold a meeting on July 10 to deliberate on the "preparedness to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic". The meeting so far has not been cancelled or deferred. Only



Jairam Ramesh

two members have confirmed attendance.

"I am doubtful if we can muster up a quorum," Mr. Ramesh wrote to Mr. Naidu. But every member, irrespective of party affiliation, has asked for a virtual sitting of the committee, he said.

Both Houses of Parliament have emphatically ruled out holding virtual standing committee meetings, claiming that the process violates the confiden-

tiality norm. And the meetings can be held virtually, only if the relevant rules of procedure are amended with the approval of both Houses. This however, can be done only when Parliament meets.

Mr. Bhiduri told *The Hindu* that 14 out of the 31 members of the panel on Petroleum attended the Tuesday meeting. Out of these, though the majority were from the BJP, one each from the SP, the BSP and the AAP attended the meeting. Many of the members from the southern States could not manage to join the meeting.

Meanwhile, the Standing Committee on Home Affairs is scheduled to meet on July 15. Its earlier meeting was cancelled due to unavailability of members.