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Case Matter - 054

ಇಲಾಖೆ / ವಿಷಯ : DEPARTMENT / SUBJECT:

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## SC lifts AP HC's media gag order

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
@ New Delhi

A Supreme Court bench on Wednesday vacated a media gag order issued by the Andhra Pradesh High Court on reporting about a first information report (FIR) filed by the state's Anti Corruption Bureau (ACB) in the Amaravati land scam case. The case became a hot potato as the FIR names former advocate general Dammalapati Srinivas and two daughters of a senior apex court judge.

However, the bench did not lift the high court's stay into the ACB probe.

A three-judge bench headed by Justice Ashok Bhushan issued notice and slated the matter for final hearing in January last week. It also asked the high court not to decide on Srinivas' writ petition till it (SC bench) adjudicates the matter.

During the hearing, senior advocate Rajeev Dhawan, appearing for the Andhra government, argued that the interim high court order barring probe and gagging the media, couldn't have been passed at all.

The writ petition by Srinivas, Dhawan said, alleged malafide



Andhra Pradesh CM Jagan Mohan Reddy

but offered nothing on record to corroborate it. "This was an entirely a political writ petition against the CM and this government," he emphasised. Pointing to suspicious transactions involving Srinivas and others, Dhawan said, "Should such a complaint be investigated or not? This is the simplest question here."

Senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for the former A-G, said, "My client is targeted because he was appearing for the (former) CM. This case reeks of malafide. This is worse

than Emergency. CBI did not do anything. My reputation is being damaged."

Senior advocate Harish Salve, also appearing for the former A-G, claimed the government's decision to approach the Supreme Court amounted to a vote of no confidence against the high court and its chief justice.

"Instead of requesting HC to vacate its interim order, they came here," Salve argued, adding that it was a case of 'regime revenge' as there was no illegality in buying land in mid-2015 when thousands had bought land from June 2014, when it became public knowledge that Amaravati will be the new capital.

Dhawan rebutted, saying the state government isn't saying anything against the high court nor has any grievances. On the question of investigating the former A-G, Dhawan said, "Salve's reputation as a law officer has been impeccable. But does it mean being a law officer, someone can never be investigated for a crime? Does a law officer or a lawyer get complete immunity from investigation or prosecution?"