

Supreme court: Situation serious, may lead to riots

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The Supreme Court on Friday refused to stop high courts from

entertaining petitions challenging the Centre's demonetisation notification saying that people were seriously affected and doors of courts cannot be shut in a situation which "may lead to riots".

While dubbing the long queues outside banks and post offices as a "serious issue", the apex court expressed its reservation on the Centre's plea seeking a direction that no other court in the country should entertain petitions challenging the November 8 notification. "It is a serious issue which requires consideration," a bench comprising Chief Justice T S Thakur and Justice A R Dave said, while asking the parties to be ready with data and other issues in writing.

"Some measures are required. See the kind of problems people are facing. People have to go to the high court. If we shut them from going to the high court, how can we know the magnitude of the problem? People going to different courts indicates the magnitude of the problem," the bench said.

Attorney General (AG) Mukul Rohatgi submitted that any matter relating to the demonetisation issue should be heard by the apex court only. However, the bench said, "People are affected and they have the right to approach the courts. People are frantic. There may be riots."

Noting that there were difficulties, it asked the AG, “Can you (the Centre) dispute it.” The AG said there was no dispute, but the queues were getting shorter and even suggested that the CJI can go out during lunch and himself look at the queue. “Kindly go in the lunch time,” the AG told the bench and took objection to senior advocate Kapil Sibal, appearing for a private party, for allegedly exaggerating the situation. “It’s a political attempt in the court. I have seen your (Sibal’s) press conference also. You are not appearing for a political party, but for an advocate. You are turning the apex court into a political platform,” Rohatgi said.

However, Sibal said, “I have the freedom of speech to criticise government policies. I am talking here about the problem faced by people and not politics.” He claimed that 47 people have died since November 8 and a serious situation has arisen because of the shortage of currency notes in the banks.

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