

# No compulsion on singing anthem: SC

NEW DELHI, August 12 (PTI).

**T**HE supreme court has held that no person can be forced to join in the singing of the national anthem, if he has genuine, conscientious religious objections.

"Such compulsion would clearly contravene rights guaranteed under articles 19 (1) (A) and 25 (1) of the constitution," a division bench, comprising Mr. Justice O. Chinnappa Reddy and Mr. Justice M. M. Dutt, ruled yesterday while setting aside a Kerala high court judgement which had upheld the order expelling three school children belonging to Jehovah's Witnesses for not singing the anthem.

The court held there was no provision in law which obliged anyone to sing the national anthem nor was it disrespectful to the anthem if a person merely stood up and did not join in the singing.

The bench directed that the expelled children be readmitted in the school and allowed to pursue their studies without hindrance and be given the necessary facilities.

The three children — Bijoe, Biny Mol and Bindu Emmanuel did not sing the national anthem during the morning assembly in their school, but always respectfully stood up when it was sung.

They did not sing because, according to them, it was against the tenets of their religious faith — not the words or the thoughts of the anthem, but the singing of it.