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DELHI CONFIDENTIAL



SUDDEN CHANGE

MOST PEOPLE were taken by surprise when Danish Ali, earlier with the JD(S) and chosen by its leader and former Karnataka chief minister H D Kumaraswamy to be the party's face in New Delhi, quit the regional party and contested the Lok Sabha polls on a BSP ticket from Amroha in Uttar Pradesh. There was some more surprise in store when, after the victory, BSP chief Mayawati chose Ali to be the leader of the party in Lok Sabha. But seems like the sudden rise of Ali, who spoke on some key Bills in Parliament this session, was short-lived. After Mayawati picked Girish Chandra, party MP from Nagina, to speak on the historic debate on Article 370 in Lok Sabha, the BSP chief has now appointed Jaunpur MP Shyam Singh Yadav as leader of the party in Lok Sabha.

FROM BITTER TO BANTER

THE ACRIMONY between the government and the Opposition in Parliament seems to have eased a bit when Prime Minister Narendra Modi and leaders of other parties met at Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu's chamber for customary tea after the session was adjourned sine die. Naidu was to host a lunch for Upper House MPs on Wednesday, but he told the leaders that he cancelled it following Sushma Swaraj's death. Modi then suggested that Naidu host a meal during winter so that MPs can eat more and enjoy. In a friendly banter, Congress's Anand Sharma asked Naidu whether he was trying to save on food by hosting lunch. Modi replied that Naidu would never be a miser when it comes to hosting friends and colleagues. Leader of Opposition in the Upper House, Ghulam Nabi Azad, chipped in, saying Naidu can bring prawns from Andhra Pradesh for the meal and he would arrange for good fish curry.

BIRTHDAY MESSAGE

BIRTHDAYS OF senior leaders these days see greetings from the who's who of the political class, sometimes in personal calls, and now more often on social media platforms, although such public display of greetings is rarely seen for the MPs not so well-known. However, the situation seems to have changed for the better for Lok Sabha MPs from the first session of 17th Lok Sabha. Lok Sabha TV has begun broadcasting a small-profile snippet of every sitting member of the House in the day's programming on their respective birthdays. The practice started June-end, on the birthday of Union minister Pralhad Patel.



West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee with DMK president M K Stalin at an event to unveil the statue of M Karunanidhi on the leader's first death anniversary, in Chennai. *PTI*

Mamata expresses concern, Stalin says Centre trying to recreate dark history

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
CHENNAI, AUGUST 7

WEST BENGAL Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and DMK president M K Stalin on Wednesday accused the Centre of trying to recreate the "dark history" of the incarceration of National Conference founder Sheikh Abdullah and expressed concern over the whereabouts of mainstream political leaders from the Valley.

Banerjee unveiled a statue of former DMK supremo M Karunanidhi here on the leader's first death anniversary in the presence of Stalin on the premises of the office of DMK mouthpiece 'Murasoli'.

Addressing a gathering at a public meeting held by the DMK, Banerjee said if a decision was taken in respect of any particular state, people of that state should be taken into confidence — an apparent reference to scrapping of Article 370.

"What is happening," she said and expressed concern about the whereabouts of for-

mer CMs Mehbooba Mufti and Omar Abdullah.

Stalin said, "In the name of nationalism, the BJP government is today fomenting communalism and the DMK will oppose this duplicity with determination."

Stalin said Farooq Abdullah could not attend the event since he was under house arrest. Tracing the life and times of Sheikh Abdullah, Farooq Abdullah's father, he said the Sheikh was confined at Kodaikanal in Tamil Nadu and "they (the BJP-led Centre) are trying to recreate that dark history".

"Nowadays, why we are fighting this battle, because we have to respect Mahatma Gandhi, we cannot forget him...they were not afraid, not scared," Banerjee said, apparently targeting the BJP.

The battle was against "atrocities and fascism", she said, adding "we are ready to do it, we are ready to sacrifice our life, but we cannot sacrifice our motherland, we cannot sacrifice our Tamil land, we cannot sacrifice our Bengal land, we cannot sacrifice our country."

BOTH HOUSES BREAK SEVERAL RECORDS

Session ends on bright note, record sittings



Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad speaks in the Rajya Sabha, on Wednesday. *PTI*

Best in 17 years, keep up the momentum: Chairman to RS

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 7

THE UPPER House set a "new normal" in its "highly productive" 249th session, which was the best in 17 years with extended sittings and record number of Bills cleared, Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu said on Wednesday.

Thirty-two Bills were cleared in 35 sittings in the first session of 17th Lok Sabha.

"I am glad that my optimism has come true during this session. With great pleasure, I have a turnaround story to report to all of you and the people of the country who have been patiently waiting for such a turnaround in the form of a functional House, breaking from the disruptive past," Naidu said.

In terms of legislative output, he said, passage of 32 Bills in these 35 sittings makes it the best session in last 17 years accounting for 52 sessions.

Bills passed during this session such as the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, widely known as the triple talaq Bill, and Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Bill are significant in terms of their impact on the country's "social and economic landscape", Naidu said, speaking before adjourning the House sine die.

Naidu said, "The people have witnessed during this session

EXPLAINED Oppn story in RS: strength to cross-roads

THE PRODUCTIVITY of Rajya Sabha during the Budget Session seems to bear testimony of the new political balance in the country. The large transaction of government legislative business suggest that the Opposition, which used its numerical left in the Upper House in the last five years, seems to have lost some steam after the Lok Sabha poll results.

For Rajya Sabha Chairman Venkaiah Naidu, this was a relatively satisfying session.

what a functional Parliament means, and they are acknowledging it."

According to data available, the 131st session in 1984 was the most productive, with 37 Bills passed. Thirty-five Bills were passed in the 197th session in 2002.

"This session is the fifth best in this regard in the last 41 years," said Naidu, adding that in the last five sessions (244 to 248), only 33 Bills were passed.

While productivity of the House was at 104.92 per cent in terms of utilisation of available time, this session is the best in the last five years since 2014, and coming after 17 sessions. "During the last five sessions, productivity of the House ranged from a low of 7.44 per cent to a maximum of 65.60 per cent," he said.

Naidu also appreciated the

"spirit of mutual understanding and accommodation" between the Opposition and the Treasury benches while passing Bills such as the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) and the National Medical Council, where rights of states were protected by accepting suggestions.

Naidu also appealed members to sustain the new momentum. "Having reached a new normal in this session, the task now before all of us is to sustain it without getting back to the old ways," he said.

Soon after the Rajya Sabha was adjourned sine die on Wednesday, Naidu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and about 25 leaders from various parties discussed a range of issues. The meeting at Naidu's chamber lasted more than 30 minutes.

More legislation on digital rights in LS than RS: report

KARISHMA MEHROTRA
NEW DELHI, AUGUST 7

LOK SABHA WITNESSED more legislation on digital rights than Rajya Sabha, a scrutiny of private member's legislation reveals. Parliamentary questions in Lok Sabha about data protection, Aadhaar data breaches, digital privacy, and surveillance have more than doubled between the last two sessions, according to a new

report released by international digital rights NGO Access Now.

In a review of the last five years of Parliament, Lok Sabha expressed more interest in surveillance and snooping, with 91 questions over the last 10 years against Rajya Sabha's 13.

In both Houses, focus has shifted from snooping and net neutrality in the 2015 budget session, to Aadhaar in 2016 and 2017, and to data protection in 2018.

BJP leads with the most pri-

vacy-related questions (71 MPs in the 16th Lok Sabha), followed by INC (21 MPs), AIADMK (21 MPs) and Shiv Sena (11 MPs).

The Standing Committee on Information and Technology has focused mostly on call drops, network neutrality, data protection and privacy, BharatNet, and social media, in that order. The Standing Committee on Home Affairs has focused on Aadhaar and privacy, while the Standing Committee on Finance has fo-

cused on digital governance.

"In addressing these important issues in the context of the rapid growth of the internet, the Parliament will take an important role in developing rights-respecting frameworks for India's democracy in the digital age," the report said. The researchers relied on circulars, reports, and documents published by the secretariats of the Parliament available on the websites of both Houses.

Since 2014, digital topics

HC quashes two FIRs against Teesta Setalvad

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
AHMEDABAD, AUGUST 7

THE GUJARAT High Court on Wednesday quashed two FIRs lodged nearly five years ago against activist Teesta Setalvad after she tweeted a picture allegedly drawing parallels between a Hindu goddess and an ISIS terrorist.

Two FIRs were lodged in August 2014 against Setalvad, one at Ghatlodia police station in Ahmedabad by Vishwa Hindu Parishad activist Raju Patel, and another by one Kirit Mistry at C Division police station in Bhavnagar.

Setalvad's tweet had included a photoshopped image, allegedly drawing a visual parallel between Hindu goddess Kali and ISIS terrorists in a photograph with slain American journalist James Foley. She subsequently tweeted an apology. "The moment I realised that the illustration had created a controversy and hurt many people,

LOK SABHA

35 SITTINGS

longest session since 1991, when it sat for 49 days

67 DAYS

first session of the first Lok Sabha was the longest

36 BILLS PASSED

Most productive first session. 31 Bills were introduced and 24 passed during the first session of the first Lok Sabha in 1952. No Bills were passed in the first sessions of the 11th, 14th, 15th and 16th Lok Sabha

124.28%

Productivity

7.6 QUESTIONS

answered on an average in this session, compared to 3.35 questions answered between 1996 and 2019

51 ADDITIONAL HRS

Beyond the normal working hours, with an average of 7.39 hours per day. The latest it sat for in this session was till just a minute before midnight

RAJYA SABHA

32 BILLS PASSED

249th session was the most productive among 52 sessions over last 17 years. 35 Bills were passed during the 197th session in 2002. Only 33 Bills were passed during the last 5 sessions in 88 sittings

195 HOURS

Total duration of 35 sittings, highest among 36 sessions in 11 years for which such data is maintained. Worked for 173 hours and 33 minutes in last 5 sessions

104.92%

PRODUCTIVITY

most productive among last 17 sessions

326

ZERO HOUR SUBMISSIONS

best in 20 years spanning 63 sessions

50 SITTINGS

best ever performance in 9th session in 1955

(All figures as of August 2)



Teesta Setalvad

I deleted the tweet and tweeted an immediate apology for having inadvertently hurt their feelings."

Advocate Yogesh Ravani who represented Setalvad, said, "The court quashed the FIRs on the grounds that there was no malafide or deliberate intention and she had not intended to hurt anyone." He said it was a "balanced judgment, based on Article 19 (of the Constitution which guarantees free speech and expression) and provisions of the CrPC".

Setalvad had filed two petitions seeking the quashing of the FIRs. The Bhavnagar FIR had initially been tried at the district court but the trial was subsequently stayed and taken up by the high court.