

FROM THE GALLERY

**FROM THE CHAIR**  
**RAJYA SABHA**  
“Keep the time in mind and then make your submissions; whatever you want.”

**M VENKAIAH NAIDU**, Chairman, while initiating discussion on the Constitution (126th amendment) Bill

**LOK SABHA**  
“I would request all the new members to look at the senior members. When the papers are laid, no one stands up and engages in debates. Does any senior member stand up?”

**OM BIRLA**, Speaker, as MPs tried to raise issues while the papers were laid on table of the House

## RS passes SC/ST quota Bill after brief walkout by Cong MPs

**ABANTIKA GHOSH**  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 12

RAJYA SABHA on Thursday unanimously passed the Constitution (126th amendment) Bill, 2019, preceded by a brief walkout by Congress MPs and an outburst from Leader of Opposition Ghulam Nabi Azad about how Opposition members, while respecting the chair, did not want to be “treated as students”.

The Bill extends for another 10 years the reservation for SC/STs in the Lok Sabha and state Assemblies, and does away with the provision for nomination of Anglo-Indians to the Lok Sabha and 14 state Assemblies. The latter clause came in for criticism from almost all MPs who spoke on the Bill except for those from the treasury benches.

Replying to the concerns of members, Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad recounted the decades of oppression of SC/STs and said the government would “look into” the concerns about nomination of Anglo-Indians. He said the 10-year renewals give the government an opportunity to assess the condition of SC/STs.



**Rajya Sabha chairman M Venkaiah Naidu**

However, it was his repeated references to the past, including the Shah Bano case, the “long wait” for Bharat Ratna for leaders like Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and B R Ambedkar and the Congress stance on the triple talaq Bill and the Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu's refusal to let Congress MPs respond immediately that caused disgruntlement in the principal opposition party, which chose to walk out.

A constitutional amendment needs to be passed by no less than two-third majority with no less than 50% of the members of the House present and voting. The Congress has 46 members in the House and the Bill was finally passed with 163 “Ayes” in a House

of 240. This means that had the Congress not been present, the Bill could not have been passed.

As Congress MPs returned to the House, Azad said: “We have respect for the chair... But chair also should show some respect. We are all senior people here, CMs, Union ministers for decades. We do not want to be treated like students. The government too should have the heart to listen to criticism, the Opposition can only talk. You have the power. You cannot compete with the Opposition...”

SP's Ramgopal Yadav urged the government to restore the system of nomination of Anglo-Indian legislators.

Earlier, in an impassioned plea, Trinamool MP Derek O'Brien, who is from the Anglo-Indian community, said, “In 72 years, just one person from the community has been elected to Parliament, that's me. The government can take away the nomination but you cannot take the Indian out of the Anglo-Indian.” CPM MP K K Ragesh disputed the government figure of there being just 296 Anglo-Indians in the country, saying that in Kerala alone there are 80,000 people from the community.

## Insolvency Bill introduced in RS, Oppn says rushed

**LIZ MATHEW**  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 12

AMID AN Opposition outcry over the government taking Parliament “for a ride” by doing away with the two-day mandatory notice to MPs for a Bill to be taken up, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Thursday introduced a Bill to streamline the corporate insolvency resolution process so successful bidders can be ring-fenced from risk of criminal proceedings for offences committed by previous promoters.

Sitharaman argued that amendments to the Bill were necessary to protect industry. But the Congress, DMK and TMC protested the “way Bills are rushed through...”

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Second Amendment) Bill was distributed among MPs on Thursday, the Opposition said. They wanted the Bill to be sent to a standing committee. Responding, Sitharaman said, “...This government is responding speedily, and I do not want the Opposition to appear as though they do not want the government to function. Please do help us function.”

## Data Bill: RS picks 10 members for joint panel

**KARISHMA MEHROTRA**  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 12

A RESOLUTION to refer the Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019, to a Joint Select Committee was passed by voice vote in Rajya Sabha on Thursday, a day after it was approved by the Lok Sabha.

The decision to sidestep the IT Parliamentary Standing Committee and send the Bill to a JSC had triggered significant backlash from Opposition members on Wednesday.

The Standing Committee, headed by Congress MP Shashi Tharoor, was scheduled to hear from key witnesses on the WhatsApp-Pegasus breach on Wednesday but the meeting was postponed to Friday. According to Tharoor, the Speaker had asked him to do so considering a whip issued by the BJP to Rajya Sabha MPs. However, the Lok Sabha decided to send the Bill to a JSC on Wednesday.

The first meeting of the Standing Committee in November had seen a political stalemate with BJP members objecting to the committee having jurisdiction over the topic, citing parliamentary procedure rules. It is learnt that 12 non-BJP members, including from BJP-allied parties, voted to discuss the matter, while 12 BJP members voted



**Prasad: It needs to be further examined**

against it. The committee's chairman, Tharoor, broke the tie with his second vote in favour of discussion. All BJP members of the committee had argued against discussing data security and the WhatsApp-Pegasus breach.

The JSC, headed by a senior BJP member, will now examine the Bill further.

The panel will have 20 members from Lok Sabha and 10 from the Rajya Sabha. The 10 members were nominated on Thursday.

Introducing the motion in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday, Union Electronics & Information Technology Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad said he intends to table the Bill in the Budget session in January. “We have come with a very robust mechanism that if the data of the data principal is taken without consent, then serious penalties will occur. And, if it is used beyond the permissible limits of consent, then severe penalties. India wants to become a big centre of data processing, anonymised data processing, and also to promote the cause of the digital economy. But we are

equally keen that, this being a very seminal bill, it needs to be further examined.”

The minister said the Justice B N Srikrishna committee that drafted the Bill received 8,000 comments from 134 entities, besides feedback from 500 representatives of companies and civil society and 600 organisations from across the world.

In a letter on Wednesday, Tharoor had urged the Lok Sabha Speaker to “caution this government against such wilful exercise of undermining the House”. “In brazen disregard for the Committee, and by extension, the parliamentary convention relating to Standing Committees, this government has chosen to establish Joint Select Committee, presumably in order to extend its control by a Chairman from the ruling party.”

Incidentally, the IT Parliamentary Committee's meeting scheduled for Wednesday was postponed to Friday. According to Tharoor, the Speaker had asked him to do so considering a whip issued by the BJP to Rajya Sabha MPs. Two other people who were scheduled to speak in front of the Committee also said that they received a call from the Cabinet Secretariat's office saying that the Speaker had directed that the meeting should be cancelled.

### CONG, DMK, TMC WALK OUT OF LS

## Cong claims N-E being made another Kashmir, govt says party instigating violence

**LIZ MATHEW**  
NEW DELHI, DECEMBER 12

THE CONGRESS-LED Opposition on Thursday accused the government of making the Northeast “another Kashmir” with people protesting on the streets against the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019, and a communication blockade in parts of the region. But the treasury benches countered saying the Opposition was “instigating violence” there.

“The entire northeastern region, barring a few places, is in flames... It has become another Kashmir,” Congress Leader in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said. “Internet services have been discontinued. We are witnessing that the Kashmir phenomenon has been replicated in the Northeast,” he said.

Chowdhury, along with his party colleagues Gaurav Gogoi and Manickam Tagore, gave an adjournment notice regarding the “highly volatile situation in North East India” while the party's chief

whip, Suresh Kodikunnil, gave a notice on “protest against CAB throughout the country”. The notices were rejected by Speaker Om Birla. During Zero Hour, Chowdhury said the area is of strategic importance. “The government should take the deteriorating situation seriously,” he said.

Chowdhury's remarks triggered protests from the treasury benches. “They are instigating violence in the Northeast,” Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi said.

Congress president Sonia Gandhi then gestured to her party members to stage a walkout. Congress and DMK MPs then walked out. The TMC remained seated but party MP Saugata Roy raised the matter of the protests in Tripura and Assam. “...Army is being deployed there. How can Japanese PM visit there?” Roy asked, referring to Shinzo Abe's proposed visit to Guwahati. Roy demanded a statement from Home Minister Amit Shah on the issue. The TMC then staged a walkout.

## Speaking Sanskrit keeps diseases at bay: BJP MP

*New Delhi:* Participating in a debate on the The Central Sanskrit Universities Bill, 2019, in the Lok Sabha on Thursday, BJP MP Ganesh Singh said, “According to an American University, speaking in Sanskrit language keeps diseases such as diabetes, cholesterol and blood pressure at bay.” He did not quote the source of the study or the university's name.

Later, the House passed the Bill, which is aimed at giving three deemed Sanskrit universities the status of Central Universities.

Earlier, HRD Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal ‘Nishank’ said if there is any language that is scientific, it's Sanskrit. This prompted DMK MP Kanimozhi to question his claim. “Hon. Minister, are you a linguist? How can you say that Sanskrit is the greatest language? Who are you to say this?” she asked. **ENS**

## Tomar: Shortfall in produce led to onion price hike

*New Delhi:* Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar said on Thursday a shortfall in production has led to spike in onion price and the Union government has taken corrective measures.

States had given an estimate of production of over 69.9 lakh tonnes of onion by November 30 this season but the actual production is likely to be 53.67 lakh tonnes, Tomar told the Lok Sabha.

Replying to a discussion on crop loss and its impact on farmers, he said there is shortage of onion and the government has taken measures.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution said, “The Union government has contracted an additional 12,660 MT of onions which shall begin arriving from 27th December, 2019 onwards...” **ENS**