

# 7 IN PARLIAMENT BUDGET SESSION

## FROM THE GALLERY

### FROM THE CHAIR

**RAJYA SABHA**  
 "This is Parliament, not a bazaar."

**M VENKAI AH NAIDU**, Chairman, to members during protests in the House over Delhi violence.

**LOK SABHA**  
 "The honourable Speaker has been very sad."

**B MAHTAB**, BJD MP in Chair, on Speaker Om Birla's absence.

### QUOTE OF THE DAY

"The government is taking all necessary measures to prevent spread of COVID-19 in India."

**HARSH VARDHAN**, Health Minister, speaking on the issue of novel coronavirus outbreak in the Rajya Sabha.

### ROLL CALL

**PRIME MINISTER:** Not Present  
**SONIA GANDHI:** Not Present  
**RAHUL GANDHI:** Not Present

### 5 QUESTIONS



**ANANTNAG MP HASNAIN MASOODI** SPEAKS TO **AVISHEK G DASTIDAR** ON RAISING THE ISSUE OF 350 KASHMIRI STUDENTS STRANDED IN IRAN AMID THE CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK.

**Why did you raise the issue of the Kashmiri students in the House?**  
 I have been raising this issue with the government separately. Some 350 of them are stranded in Iran for the past many days. Today, since the Health Minister made a statement on coronavirus, I thought it apt to bring it to the notice of the House.

**Who have you spoken to in the government about this?**  
 I have spoken to the External Affairs Minister twice sometime ago. In my opinion, no concrete steps have been taken so far; I feel it has not been taken very seriously.

**Are you satisfied with the response of the government?**  
 They have been evacuating people from China. The government is alive to the fact that after China, Iran is the place affected by coronavirus. Kashmir and Iran have educational ties. Children from Shia community in Kashmir go to Iran to study... The government should do something to bring them home.

**Are you in touch with their families here?**  
 Yes, I have been in touch with them. They are in tremendous trauma. They have even demonstrated in Kashmir to draw the attention of the government. The children are in panic too, they are hardly in their 20s. But so far nothing has been done...

**Are you hopeful that something will be done for these students?**  
 Today I also spoke to Dr Harsh Vardhan about this after his statement in the House. He has assured me of help. Let's see.

# Govt to press for termination of LS membership of one suspended MP

**PRADEEP KAUSHAL**  
 NEW DELHI, MARCH 5

THE GOVERNMENT on Thursday said it will press for the termination of Lok Sabha membership of one of the seven Congress lawmakers who were suspended after unruly scenes in the House.

"We will seek the expulsion of one member from the House," Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi told the media. He refrained from naming the member, but official sources disclosed that the reference was to Gaurav Gogoi, Congress MP from Kaliabor constituency of Assam and son of former chief minister Tarun Gogoi.

The minister said the government will shortly submit a letter to Speaker Om Birla to request him to set up a committee to inquire into the conduct of Congress members. Joshi said the tearing of a document after snatching it from the Speaker's table was "unprecedented". He maintained that no BJP member, while in the Opposition, had ever snatched papers from the Speaker's table. "Let them cite one such instance," Joshi said. A BJP leader said a committee will be set up soon to look into whether the conduct of Opposition MPs in Lok Sabha on Thursday could invite termination of membership.

The Congress MPs were suspended under Rule 374 of the Rules of Procedure For The Conduct of Business in the Lok Sabha. According to 374(1): The Speaker may, if he "deems it necessary, name a member who disregards the authority of the Chair or abuses the rules of the House by persistently and wilfully obstructing the business thereof". The next clause, (2), says, "If a member is so named by the Speaker, the Speaker shall, on a motion being made forthwith put the question that the member (naming such member) be suspended from the service of the House for a period not exceeding the remainder of the session..."



Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi in Lok Sabha. PTI

As for the criticism that the resolution had been carried through in the absence of the Speaker, Rule 9(1) says: "At the commencement of the House or from time to time, as the case may be, the Speaker shall nominate from amongst the members a panel of not more than 10 Chairpersons, anyone of whom may preside over the House in the absence of the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker when so requested by the Speaker or, in the absence of the Speaker, by the Deputy Speaker."

A member can be expelled (under different provisions) if he holds any office of profit under the Government of India (other than an office permitted by Parliament of India by law); if he possesses an unsound mind; is declared insolvent; has ceased being a citizen of India; disqualified by any law made by Parliament; disqualified on the ground of defection (under the 10th Schedule); has been convicted for promoting enmity between different groups; convicted for bribery; has been punished for preaching and practising untouchability, dowry, or sati; has been convicted for an offence and sentenced to imprisonment and has been dismissed for corruption or for disloyalty to the state (as a government servant).

# Cong reaches out to other Oppn parties

**MANOJ CG**  
 NEW DELHI, MARCH 5

AMID SIGNALS that the government is pushing for termination of one of the seven Congress MPs who were suspended from Lok Sabha for the remaining period of the Budget Session for "misconduct", the Congress on Thursday reached out to other Opposition parties to put up a united front to stall such an attempt. The Congress said the suspension of the MPs was a "dictatorial decision" and was motivated by "revenge politics".

Sources said the Congress has already discussed the issue with some Opposition parties. Leaders of some of the parties, including the DMK and the NCP, are likely to meet the Speaker Friday to register their protest and demand revocation of the suspension. Congress leaders said the party will not take the decision lying down and alleged that the government is unnecessarily provoking the Opposition to ensure that the Budget session continues to be stormy and there is no discussion on the Delhi riots.

"All the Opposition (parties)... we are on the same page... none of the Opposition parties will allow this government which is hell-bent on throttling the voice of the Opposition parties. We wouldn't budge from our own demand that the Delhi riot issue has to be discussed inside Parliament," Congress leader in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said.

The suspended Congress MPs are Gaurav Gogoi, T N Prathapan, Dean Kuriakose, Manickam Tagore, Rajmohan Unnithan, Benny

Behanan and Gurjeet Singh Aujla. Sources said the government is seeking the termination of Gogoi's membership. "We will seek termination of the member's membership. What the Congress did in Lok Sabha showed their utmost disrespect to the Chair," Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi told reporters.

Chowdhury said what happened in Parliament was shameful for Parliamentary democracy. Chowdhury said the Opposition was ready to cooperate with the Government in passing Bills but there has to be a discussion on the Delhi riots first. "We readily agreed when the Speaker told us in the morning that the government wants to give a statement in the House on coronavirus... We cooperated with the government and also gave suggestions... We stuck to our demand for a discussion even after objectionable remarks were made against Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi..." he said.

"The government says it is thinking about allowing the discussion on March 11... If a discussion can be held on March 11, why not earlier?... And now they have suspended seven of our MPs. What does that mean?... they want to weaken us when we take part in the discussion... this is not the decision of the Speaker... this is the decision of the government..." he said. "If this government does not want to discuss legitimate issues, this government will be recognised as an authoritarian regime," he said.

Congress communication department head Randeep Singh Surjewala said, "If the Prime Minister will trample upon India's Parliament... you might as well throw out the entire Opposition forever..."

# LS looks at first week washout as ruling, Oppn sides lock horns

**LIZ MATHEW**  
 NEW DELHI, MARCH 5

WITH THE Opposition showing no signs of compromise on its stand that Parliament should discuss the Delhi riots before taking up other issues, the first week of post-recess Budget Session appears headed for a complete washout. And amid the high-decibel protests by the Opposition, led by Congress members, the government's poor floor management has also come under fire for the stalemate in Lok Sabha since Monday.

The communication between the government and the Opposition, and even among the government and BJP MPs, has been "ineffective", according to a source.

One ruling party leader said, "We (Treasury benches) have not been communicated our strategy in the House. On many occasions this week we have been caught off guard when the Opposition became aggressive. This is one reason why the Opposition managed to get proceedings adjourned."

BSP member Danish Ali asserted that there has been "no effort from the government" to engage the Opposition in a dialogue to end this stalemate.

And that communication is unlikely to gain strength, with a combatant BJP keen on taking further action against seven Congress MPs suspended on Thursday for having "insulted the Chair and violated all rules", according to ruling party leaders.

Opposition members, on the other hand, took exception to the "strong action" against Congress MPs in Lower House — as it was read out not by the Speaker but by a panel member.

"There will be an inquiry committee to look into the possibility of disqualifying these MPs, who have committed gross misconduct," a senior BJP leader said, adding that the House had taken such action during the term of then



BJP MP Meenakshi Lekhi in the Speaker's chair in Lok Sabha. PTI

Speaker Somnath Chatterjee (between 2004 and 2009).

Senior BJP leader and Union minister Bhupender Yadav's tweet offered a hint at likely action: "...The deplorable conduct of these MPs in the Lok Sabha is disgraceful and embarrassing to the parliamentary system."

Some Opposition members, however, pointed out that the Speaker should have been present in the House when the action was announced. "Disciplinary proceedings were announced without the Speaker present," BSP's Danish Ali said.

He was critical also of the government's "inconsistent" response to MPs showing posters and banners inside the House. He told *The Indian Express*: "Many members have brought posters and banners in the past. TDP members used to protest vehemently with banners and posters demanding special status for Andhra Pradesh. Earlier, TRS members brought huge

banners to the House during their agitation for creation of Telangana," he said.

Meanwhile, the Speaker, who has been particular about chairing the proceedings without any major breaks ever since he took over as the presiding officer of Lok Sabha, did not come to the House for the second consecutive day on Thursday.

According to sources, Birla was "totally disappointed" at continuing physical scuffle in Lok Sabha despite his strict warning. They said Birla had assured leaders of opposition parties during a meeting he convened on Tuesday morning that there would be a discussion on the Delhi riots after Holi. "Opposition leaders had agreed to it, but (in the House) they pretended as if nothing of that sort happened," a BJP leader said. "Despite warnings, Congress members, including its top leaders in the House, went to the Treasury side to provoke ruling party MPs."

# 'Hurt' over House ruckus, Speaker skips LS proceedings again

**AVISHEK G DASTIDAR & MANOJ CG**  
 NEW DELHI, MARCH 5

AFTER CHAIRING meetings with floor leaders of all parties to ensure that the House runs smoothly and after almost imploring in vain for days that the protesting MPs go back to their seats without creating ruckus, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla is reportedly "hurt" that no one paid heed to his requests for order.

For the second consecutive day on Thursday, the Speaker remained conspicuous by his absence during the proceedings of the House. MPs Bhartruhari Mahtab, Rama Devi, Rajendra Agarwal and Meenakshi Lekhi filled in for Birla as the House witnessed continuous ruckus, first over communal violence in Delhi and then over a remark by Nagaur MP Hanuman Beniwal. This eventually led to seven Congress MPs getting suspended. In the meetings with Birla, floor leaders of various parties had reportedly "promised" to let the House run smoothly.

No matter what the political temperature of the House, Birla usually chairs the sessions in the morning starting with Question Hour. But this time there was a departure from that routine.

Instead, Mahtab on Thursday assumed the chair at 11 am when the House assembled and conveyed to the protesting Congress MPs that Birla was saddened at the state of the House.

"The honourable Speaker was very sad about the things that happened day before yesterday. You are very much aware of this and some of you must have met him and you must be very much aware that the manner in which the House is getting disrupted does not give any credit to anyone. The honourable

# RS adjourned after protests over Delhi riots

**EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE**  
 NEW DELHI, MARCH 5

RAJYA SABHA proceedings were adjourned for the day on Thursday amid protests and unrelenting sloganeering by Opposition members over the Delhi riots, which have left 53 people dead so far.

With the protests continuing, Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu said, "This is Parliament, not a bazaar."

Before adjournment of the House, Health Minister Harsh Vardhan made a statement on the coronavirus situation in the country and members, including those from the Opposition, made constructive suggestions. But as soon as Naidu asked MPs to start with their Zero Hour mentions, Congress members were up on their feet and were joined by other Opposition MPs.

Later, Opposition MPs, including from the Congress, the Trinamool Congress, and the AAP, entered the Well of the House and started raising slogans against the government and Home Minister Amit Shah over the violence.

Naidu warned that if a member whose Zero Hour notice has been accepted and does not raise it despite being present in the House, he or she will not be given another chance during the remaining period of the current session. Around noon, Naidu asked protesting members to return to their seats so that the Question Hour could be taken up. But with opposition parties not yielding, he adjourned proceedings for the day.

Earlier, when the House met for the day, Leader of Opposition Ghulam Nabi Azad said the Congress and other opposition parties had previously decided that business in the House will be allowed only after a discussion on the Delhi riots takes place. But in view of the situation arising out of the coronavirus outbreak, opposition parties do not want to deprive people of information about the government's steps to deal with the situation and have thus decided to allow the Health Minister to make a statement on the issue, he said.



Om Birla

Speaker has been very sad," Mahtab told a group of some 30 MPs from Congress who had been raising slogans.

Sources said Birla was to attend the wedding reception of BJP MP Ganesh Singh's son in the evening.

During the Question Hour, Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari answered a couple of questions, but it got drowned in the din.

At one point, Mahtab asked Congress floor leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury to ask his party MPs to go back to their seats. Soon, he had to adjourn the House till noon.

Chowdhury later said that he had had a word with the Speaker and requested Birla to resume chairing the sessions. "For the last two days, Speaker has been absent from the House and on more than a couple of occasions, I have personally approached and beseeched the Speaker that... please occupy your Chair, the Chair is befitting for you only. Don't send the Chairman or other Presiding official during the Question Hour," Chowdhury said.

# Parents' date, place of birth essential for back-end: Govt on NPR

**DEEPTIMAN TIWARY**  
 NEW DELHI, MARCH 5

IN AN indication that the government is reluctant to drop contentious questions from the National Population Register (NPR) form, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) had told a Parliamentary standing committee that these questions were asked in the past as well and are necessary for back-end data processing.

The committee has, however, observed that with the government unable to build a consensus on the NPR process, there is a danger of the Census exercise being stymied.

The NPR exercise is to be carried out with the house-listing phase of Census 2020 and is scheduled to begin on April 1.

The Standing Committee on Ministry of Home Affairs tabled its report on Demands for Grants (2020-2021) in Rajya Sabha on Thursday. The committee is headed by Congress MP Anand Sharma.

The report has stated that the committee had asked the ministry over questions regarding date and place of birth of parents as listed in NPR 2020 form.

Multiple states have raised objections to the questions, and even some NDA allies such as JD(U) and IJP have expressed reservations about the questions.

"The Ministry submitted... the Date & Place of Birth of Parents were collected in NPR 2010 as well for all parents who were enumerated within the household," the report stated. "For parents living elsewhere or expired at the time of enumeration, only the names of parents were collected. To facilitate back-end data processing and making the data items of date and place of birth complete for all households, details of parents are being collected in a more comprehensive manner in NPR 2020."

In the wake of several states passing resolutions against NPR, the committee noted the government's inability to build a consensus. It stated: "The Committee... on 18th February

**EXPLAINED**

## Why govt backs linking Aadhaar, NPR

THE GOVERNMENT says linking the two will facilitate Aadhaar's integration with other databases and help clean the various other databases. The MHA says government-created databases such as Aadhaar, Voter ID, birth & death register, NPR, driving licence and passport may contain "many spurious and incorrect entries in databases". These databases, the ministry told the House panel, do not communicate with one another since there is no common identifier. "Collection of Aadhaar number (on voluntary basis), Voter ID, passport number and driving licence number during updation of NPR will facilitate communication among these databases, subject to the existing laws," it said. The Aadhaar number, the MHA reasons, can act as a common link among these large databases.

observed that there is a lot of dissatisfaction and fear among people regarding the upcoming NPR and Census. The Committee feels

these apprehensions should have been duly ventilated in the media. The MHA must consider some way out so that the Census goes

smoothly."

Otherwise, the committee noted, there is a "chance of the entire process being stymied in many states".

In its conclusion, the committee even urged the government to take appropriate steps to build consensus. It recommended all states and Union Territories to be "fully convinced on various issues pertaining to the NPR which commences in April to have a national consensus so that there is absolute clarity and no apprehension" among the people. This, the committee noted, will help conduct both exercises in a smooth manner.

The committee sought to know about the proposals for use of digital technology and biometric identification for data collection for the Census. The MHA replied that there was no proposal to undertake biometric identification in Census 2021.

The committee also asked about the possibility of using the Aadhaar database for updating NPR without undergoing fresh exercise of NPR to prevent duplication of efforts

and expenditure.

The ministry, the report stated, submitted that since NPR is being updated, and not created afresh, existing Aadhaar database cannot serve the purpose and there is no question of duplication. "Besides, Aadhaar is individual data, whereas NPR contains family-wise data. It will not be possible without visiting each and every household to construct family based data from Aadhaar database. Various welfare schemes of State and Central Governments are generally family based for which NPR data may be used," the report stated about the ministry's contention.

The committee, however, was not convinced and asked the government to consider Aadhaar database for NPR updation. "The Committee is of the opinion that Aadhaar is not just an individual's data but is also tied up with ration card, PAN, etc. Aadhaar metadata also includes entire family's surname, address, etc. Therefore, the Committee fails to understand as to why this should be treated as individual data only."