

Parliament stalls as Opposition wants Shah out

Multiple adjournments, unruly scenes in both Houses

27/12/88
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SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Lok Sabha on Monday witnessed unruly scenes and four adjournments as Congress and BJP MPs jostled with each other over the Opposition's insistence that Home Minister Amit Shah resign taking responsibility for the Delhi riots. Speaker Om Birla finally adjourned the House until Tuesday.

The Rajya Sabha witnessed multiple adjournments after the Opposition's demand for an "immediate discussion" was not accepted by Rajya Sabha Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu, though he agreed to a debate on a later date.

Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad accused the government of sleeping when Delhi was burning.

To seek suspension

Blaming the Opposition for disruptions and resorting to tactics such bringing posters and tearing paper inside the Lok Sabha, government sources said the Centre would move a resolution seeking suspension of "unruly" Congress MPs including Ganraj Gogoi, Ravneet Singh



In the line of fire: Home Minister Amit Shah arriving to attend the Parliament session on Monday. — R. V. MOORTHY

Bittu, and Hibi Eden. Congress leader in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury accused the government of tearing democracy to shreds, and said a BJP MP had assaulted Congress MP from Kerala Ramya Haridas.

Speaker 'pained'

"I am personally pained at the developments in the House. You are not pained. I do not want to run proceedings under such circumstances... Everybody should deliberate to ensure that the dignity of the House is maintained," Mr. Birla said before adjourning the House for the day.

When the Lok Sabha met at 2 p.m. after the first half of the proceedings were adjourned to mourn Baidyanath Prasad Mahto, Janata Dal(U) MP, the Opposition

trooped into the Well and started shouting slogans.

As the Speaker took up the listed business, the Congress MPs walked across to the Treasury side, holding up a black banner calling for Mr. Shah's resignation.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi said the Congress was now talking about Delhi riots when 3,000 people were killed in Delhi in 1984 [anti-Sikh riots] under its watch.

Amid slogans of "Amit Shah murdabad" (Down with Amit Shah), when the Speaker initiated discussions on the tax settlement Bill, Mr. Gogoi and Mr. Bittu went to the Treasury benches where Sanjay Jaiswal of the BJP was speaking on the *Vivaad Se Vishwas* Bill.

BJP members, including Ramesh Bidhuri and Nishi-

kant Dubey, then rushed to the Well and in the melee, some Congress MPs tore papers and tossed them in the air.

Members from both sides then began pushing and shoving each others till the proceedings were adjourned till 3 p.m.

While Union Ministers Ravi Shankar Prasad and Smriti Irani were seen trying to pacify the agitated members, Congress president Sonia Gandhi and party leader Rahul Gandhi were present in the House.

Multi-party din

In the Rajya Sabha, MPs from the Congress, the Trinamool, the Samajwadi Party, the Bahujan Samaj Party, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam and the Left were up on their feet, shouting slogans.

"The matter [Delhi riots] is definitely important and deserves to be discussed," Mr. Naidu said, adding he would admit a discussion and allot time after discussing with the Minister, the Leader of the House and the Leader of the Opposition.

"Our priority should be restoring normalcy. We should see that normalcy is restored and then we can discuss ways and means of preventing it [such violence]," he added as he asked the House to send out a message in one voice on the issue.

I was beaten up, Cong. MP complains to Birla

SOBHANA K. NAIR
NEW DELHI

Ramya Haridas, Congress MP from Kerala, on Monday alleged that she was "physically assaulted" by Jaskaur Meena of the BJP in the Lok Sabha and that she was being targeted repeatedly because she was a Dalit.

The incident has left her shaken, and she burst into tears in the Lok Sabha.

"To raise slogans or march into the well of the House is a regular parliamentary strategy used by the Opposition parties to express their protest. We were not doing anything unusual," Ms. Haridas told *The Hindu*.

The Congress MP said it was unusual that Speaker Om Birla did not allow a discussion on the Delhi riots which have left 46 dead and saw a complete breakdown of the administrative control of the government and the police.

"I was shocked when suddenly someone hit me on my shoulder from back. We don't expect to be beaten up inside Parliament. It is unfortunate that the House, which so far was a safe space, has been reduced to this," Ms. Haridas said.



Ramya Haridas

She met Mr. Birla after the incident. "If the Speaker wants to establish the truth, he can look into the CCTV and other Lok Sabha TV camera footage," the Congress MP said.

In her complaint to Mr. Birla, Ms. Haridas sought action against Ms. Meena. She said that the BJP had been targeting her for being a Dalit and a woman.

During the winter session last year, the Congress had alleged that two of its women parliamentarians, including Ms. Haridas, were "manhandled" by marshals in the Lok Sabha when they were protesting in the well of the House over the Maharashtra government formation. Both the MPs had lodged a complaint with the Speaker.

PAPER CLIPPING

DEPARTMENT / SUBJECT: Parliament

NAME OF THE NEWS PAPER: The Arshel

DATE: 03/02/2018