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ಪತ್ರಿಕೆಯ ಹೆಸರು : NAME OF THE NEWS PAPER: Times of India ದಿನಾಂಕ : DATE: 4/9/2020

# 'Oppn parties agreed to scrap question hour'

Except TMC's Derek O'Brien, All Gave Consent: Joshi

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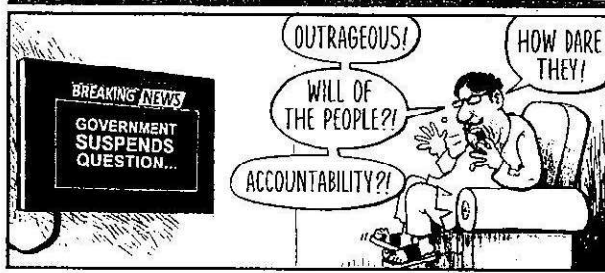
**New Delhi:** There will be no question hour, a curtailed zero hour and no private members' bills during the upcoming monsoon session of Parliament, the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha secretariats have decided. In normal course, ministers concerned respond to oral questions on the floor of the House.

Parliamentary affairs minister Pralhad Joshi said the decision to scrap question hour during the monsoon session was taken after most opposition parties gave their consent. The government argued that accommodating question hour would require the presence of a large number of officials which would make it difficult to observe social-distancing protocols in the officials' gallery.

"Opposition parties are raising questions regarding question hour and zero hour. Arjun Ram Meghwal, V. Muralidharan and I had spoken to every party regarding this. Except for TMC's Derek O'Brien, all others agreed to scrap question hour," Joshi said. The minister added that he has now suggested to Lok Sabha speaker Om Birla and Rajya Sabha chairman M Venkaiah Naidu to limit zero hour to 30 minutes. "They will take the final decision. We have requested the speaker to take unstarred ques-

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SANDEEP ADHWARYU



**Times View:** Question hour is one of the fundamentals of Parliamentary proceedings. It enables the Opposition to do its job, which is important for any healthy democracy. True, these are extraordinary times, but the government could have struck a healthy balance by perhaps reducing the number of ministries answering questions on any given day and thereby the number of officials in attendance

tions," he added.

The move had triggered a row with opposition leaders referring to it as an assault on democracy. While Congress's leader in Lok Sabha, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, had written to Birla opposing the move, Rajya Sabha leader of opposition, Ghulam Nabi Azad, had agreed it would be difficult to accommodate question hour since the

House would sit only for four hours a day. Congress's Anand Sharma had tweeted his reservations, calling the decision "arbitrary, shocking and undemocratic". "Parliament sessions are not meant only for government business, but also scrutiny and accountability of government," he said on Twitter. The monsoon session of Parliament is scheduled to begin on September 14 and sit till October 1.