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SPG Act amendment Bill gets Parliament nod

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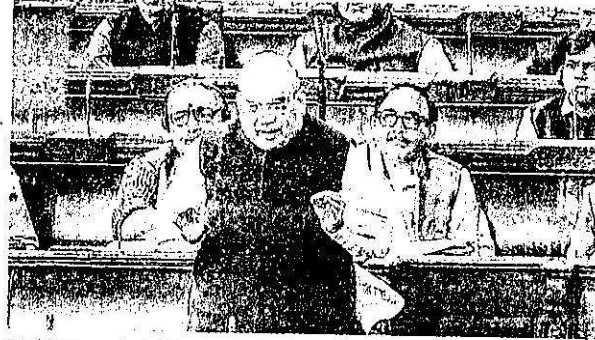
It will end dilution of the Act over the years: Amit Shah

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Parliament on Tuesday passed an amendment to the Special Protection Group Act, 1988, that will allow SPG cover to the Prime Minister and former Prime Ministers for a period of five years after leaving office.

The SPG (Amendment) Bill, 2019 was passed in the Rajya Sabha by voice vote, after the Congress staged a walkout accusing the government of targeting the Gandhis - Congress president Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra.

Responding to allegations of "political vendetta," Home Minister Amit Shah said he was opposed to "dynasty, not family." He said the SPG had been raised to provide security to Prime Ministers after the assassina-



Making a point: The amendment will not affect the Gandhis as their SPG cover had been revoked, said Amit Shah.

tion of the then-Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in 1984, but four amendments to the Act had been brought over the years to dilute it in order to provide SPG cover to former Prime Ministers' families.

The amendments would end the "dilution" of the Act over the years. They had been brought keeping "one family" in mind.

He said the amendment would not affect the Gandhis as their SPG cover had already

been revoked following a review.

He said the government was concerned about the security of "130 crore Indians," and they included the Gandhis as well as "BJP workers." He said 120 workers of the party had been killed in Kerala.

With the amendment, he said, Prime Minister Narendra Modi would stand to lose as SPG cover would be revoked five years after he leaves office.

Probe ordered into Priyanka security breach

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

Home Minister Amit Shah told the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday that a high-level inquiry has been initiated and three security personnel were suspended following the November 25 incident when a black SUV allegedly trespassed into the Lodhi Road bungalow of Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra.

Giving details of the incident, Mr. Shah told the House that the security personnel were informed that her brother Rahul Gandhi would be visiting her in a black " Tata Safari SUV" but some Congress workers from Meerut in Uttar Pradesh arrived at the same time in a similar vehicle and were allowed to go through

the main gate without a security check. Several members had linked the security breach to the removal of SPG cover.

Mr. Shah said the security cover of the Gandhi family had not been removed, but replaced with Z plus CRPF cover with the same number of personnel and vehicles.

He was speaking on the Special Protection Group (SPG) Amendment Bill, 2019. Ms. Priyanka Gandhi's husband Robert Vadra had termed the incident a "very big" security lapse and alleged that the removal of the Gandhi family's SPG cover was a "political" move.

"Our security is not important as much as the security of the women in the country," Mr. Vadra said.