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Congress stalls assembly over MLA's suspension

Debate On Polls At One Go Also A Sticking Point

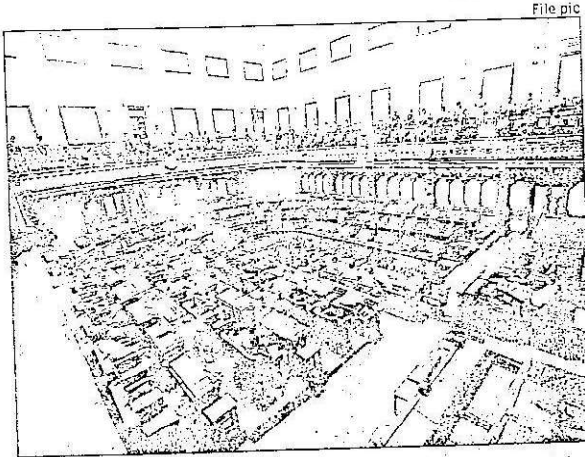
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Bengaluru: Congress demonstrations over the suspension of its MLA, BK Sangameshwara, and the special debate on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's suggestion of 'One Nation, One Election' disrupted assembly proceedings for the second consecutive day on Friday. The house was repeatedly adjourned as Congress members demanded that speaker Vishweshwar Hegde Kageri should revoke the suspension.

POLITICS & POLICY

They trooped into the well of the house, raising slogans, and also sought deferment of the discussion on simultaneous elections. They had also stalled the debate on Thursday, the first day of the budget session.

Sangameshwara, a four-time MLA from Bhadravathi in Shivamogga district, is



DOWNED HOUSE: Opposition has protested the speaker's decision to hold a debate on PM's 'One Nation, One Election' suggestion

barred from attending the assembly till March 12 after he removed his shirt inside the assembly to protest what he claimed were false cases against him and his family. Opposition leader Siddaramaiah said on Friday that the MLA never intended to remove his shirt and acted out of frustration as he was not being heard in the chair. He urged Kageri to use his discretionary powers and reverse the suspension.

BJP members slammed Congress while defending the speaker's action.

"To what level are we going? He (Sangameshwara) is not apologetic and has criticised the chair in front of the media. If Congress members are defending his conduct, it shows to what level they have stooped. The decision to suspend him is right and it should not be revoked," said law and parliamentary affairs minister Basavaraj Bommai.

BJP MLA Araga Jnanendra took a swipe at the opposition. "Do they think this (house) is a cabaret club?"

Congress members ig-

nored the speaker's repeated requests for cooperation in the debate on simultaneous elections. "If you want to oppose the concept of 'One Nation, One Election,' you are free to do it by participating in the debate. It is fine if you don't want to participate, but you have no right to curtail the rights of other members who want to speak on the subject," Kageri told them.

He allowed Bommai to make the opening remarks of the discussion. The opposition was in no mood to relent and continued shouting slogans before rushing to the well of the house. Finally, Kageri adjourned the house. The commotion continued after members reassembled post-lunch, forcing him Kageri to adjourn the proceedings till Monday.

Earlier in the day, Congress MLAs tried to help Sangameshwara enter the assembly, but marshals stopped them. Siddaramaiah had a heated argument with marshals: "Vidhana Soudha is neither the chief minister's property nor the speaker's. Sangameshwara is a legislator, not a terrorist. You should allow him inside."