

INTERVIEW

'Some senior MPs wanted two-day Parliament Session'

The monsoon session of Parliament begins next week under the shadow of the Covid-19 pandemic. Though the Modi government is at the receiving end of the opposition over the truncated session, Parliamentary Affairs Minister **Pralhad Joshi** in a conversation with *DH's Sagar Kulkarni* said that several senior leaders across parties had asked him to have a two-day session to follow the Constitutional obligation of convening Parliament within six months of its previous meeting.

What are the challenges in convening the monsoon session?

It has been a challenge not only for India but for the entire world. We are in the midst of an unprecedented situation. The disease itself is highly contagious. Even if one person is infected, it will create a problem. So, we have to ensure testing, asking members to bring certificates of negative tests.

What special arrangements have been made?

First of all, each House will



Pralhad Joshi.

sit only for four hours. The chambers of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha will be used for the sittings with members occupying visitors' galleries as well to ensure physical distancing. We have also

used technology to link the chambers of both the Houses electronically so that the presiding officer can have seamless access to members seated in either of the chambers. Entry for the personal staff of MPs and ministers has been restricted. Ministers will be allowed to get along only one officer. Sanitisation of the chambers at regular intervals will also be done.

How have members of Parliament responded?

Some senior members were

not in favour of the session. I don't want to disclose anybody's name, but they suggested Parliament should also have a two-day session to get all the Ordinances passed. But, Prime Minister Narendra Modi wanted the bills to be discussed and debated after taking necessary safety measures. Also, we felt a virtual session was not feasible.

The Opposition is also unhappy about the scrapping of Question Hour?

That is the most unfortunate and irresponsible behaviour

of some parties. We had talked to all the leaders and explained to them that all other things, except the Question Hour, will be there.

If you take the Question Hour, you have to prepare for 20 questions and at least minimum 100 officers would be there. The officers' gallery is a very small place.

The second issue is time. We are meeting only for four hours. We do not fear questions. People have bestowed their trust in the Modi government. We have nothing to hide or run away.