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Parliament stalls again over fuel price hike

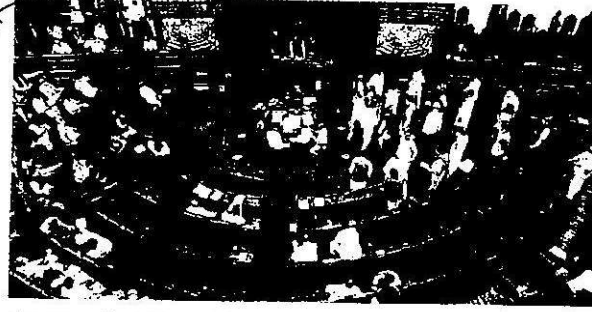
Opposition MPs protest against govt.'s refusal to allow a separate debate on issue

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

For the second consecutive day, both Houses of Parliament failed to function on Tuesday, with relentless protests from Opposition members after their demand for a debate on the frequent hike in fuel prices was rejected.

Rajya Sabha saw two adjournments before the House was closed for the day at 2.10 p.m. Tuesday was the first sitting of both Houses of Parliament as per the pre-COVID timings and seating arrangements, with members sitting in their respective chambers instead of being spread out in both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha chambers.

The first adjournment in the Upper House came within 20 minutes of its convening as Opposition members



Fury over fuel: Opposition leaders staging a protest in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday. •PTI

began protests when Deputy Chairman Harivansh once again refused to concede to their demand for suspending the business of the day to debate the rising fuel prices.

"You all are well aware of the ruling given by the Chairman on the issue; he has already said that there are many opportunities to discuss the fuel hike in the course of the session and separate

time cannot be set aside for it," Mr. Harivansh said.

Leader of the Opposition Malikarjun Kharge said the fuel hikes have had a cascading impact on the prices of essential commodities and there should be a separate discussion on the consequent scarcity. He said, at least, the government should assure the House that the prices will be scaled back

to the 2013-14 levels.

Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad tried unsuccessfully to convince the Opposition to clear the Statutory Resolution and the Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Bill, 2021, which seeks to replace an ordinance in this regard, saying its passage is essential. The Bill has already been passed by the Lok Sabha.

However, senior Congress MP Anand Sharma said according to the tradition in the House, no government bill is taken up when the Opposition is demanding a discussion over an important issue. "Opposition has a right to take up the issue," he said as several opposition members kept raising slogans demanding a discussion on the rising fuel prices.

Similar scenes were witnessed in Lok Sabha.