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It's official: Question Hour gone

Opposition slams move; Parliamentary Affairs Minister cites shorter hours of sittings

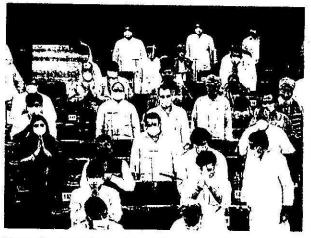
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI 15/21/18 The Lok Sabha on Monday adopted a motion to do away with Question Hour and private members' business during the current monsoon session of Parliament owing to the special circumstances and curtailed hours of the House, but not without facing a push back from the Opposition benches who termed it the Executive prevailing over the Legislature and violating norms of separation of powers.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi moved the motion in the Lok Sabha citing the extraordinary circumstances amid which the House was being convened, and the allotted four-hour sittings per day.

The Opposition refused to be convinced, however, with Leader of the Congress in Lok Sabha, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, terning Question Hour as the golden hour" of the P.o. s-:

"We get a han e to raise issues of comp on people. Question Hour is simply a golden hour of the House," he said, adding that by doing way with it, the government is trying to suppress this democratic practice which has followed Independence.

All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen MP Asaduddin Owaisi said Question Hour and private members' business were the cornerstone of democracy and were essential for the orde



Remembering veterans: Lawmakers paying tribute to Pranab Mukherjee and others who passed away this year. • PTI

mocracy. "I urge the Speaker not to allow the executive to encroach on the territory of the legislature. It is a shameful day," Mr. Owaisi said. He also requested for a division on the motion, which was not accepted by Speaker Orn Birla. Congress MP Manish Tewari said Question Hour was the only time when the Opposition could had the government accountable.

'Integral part'

Trinamool MP Kalyan Banerjee said Question Hour is an integral part of the basic structure of parliamentary procedure and "we cannot destroy that part".

"We also have our views to express," he said adding, "Kindly do not take away this advantage. It will take the entire glamour, 50% glamour of . mour runhing

ed out that before arriving at this decision, deputy leader in the Lok Sabha, and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh had spoken to almost all leaders of various parties.

"I would like to ask various leaders who questioned the suspension of Question Hour that all State Assemblies it oldding Punjub, West bengal Rajasthan, f ndhra Prade h and Kerala have run sessions for a day or two and passed several bills, whereas the government of India decided to run for 18 days and hold discussion on bills," he said.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said he had discussed the matter with several leaders and noted that this session is being held in an extraordinary situation. He added that Mr. Choudhary had agreed with the propo-

People's right to question curtailed: Azad

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

By suspending the Question Hour, the government has deprived the people of India of an opportunity to question the government, Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Ghulam Nabi Azad, said on Monday.

Mr. Azad said that in a democracy the government is answerable to people. "People of the country : have no access or means to ask the question to the minister inside Parliament; their representatives are MPs. The people of India have been deprived of asking the question," Mr. Azad . said.

Trinamool Congress MP Derei: O' Brien moved the ata andment against the go verment decision, 'ir this government really wanted to make a meaningful suggestion they would not have struck at the very heart of parliamentary democracy," Mr. O' Brien

Chairman Rajya Sabha Venkaiah Naidu said Parliament was meeting in extraordinary times. Question Hour would have meant that government of India officials had to be present and that would