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# Rajasthan House deadlocked over phone tapping

BJP demands list of those whose phones were tapped, Congress in no mood to oblige

RAJESH ASNANI @ Jaipur

THE phone tapping row led to a huge storm in the Rajasthan Assembly on Tuesday. The opposition BJP disrupted the proceedings, causing repeated adjournments and a deadlock in the session. The party has demanded a special discussion in the Assembly and wants a list of those whose phones were tapped last year. The Congress is in no mood to oblige.

The row erupted after the Ashok Gehlot government a few days ago accepted that phone tapping "happens in normal procedure in the interest of public safety and security". But the government had not given any details about it, though it clarified that phones of ministers and MLAs were not tapped last year.

The government's reaction came on a query by BJP MLA Kalicharan Saraf who asked if it was true that phone tapping cases came up in the last few days. He wanted to know under which law and on whose orders such tapping took place. In its response, the government admitted to phone-tapping and stated, "In the interest of public safety or public order, and to prevent occurrence of a crime which might risk public safety or public order, telephones are intercepted after approval by a competent officer under various sections of law."

This confirmation on Saraf's question asked during the House session of August 2020 was posted on the Assembly website. During the question hour, leader of the Opposition



I have stated everything I wanted to on this issue in the last assembly session in August last year. I think all this is just a part of the infighting and one-upmanship in the state BJP. They are raking up unnecessary issues and disturbing the smooth running of the House

Ashok Gehlot, Rajasthan CM

Gulabchand Kataria accused the Congress of misusing government machinery to contain a rebellion inside the party by tapping phones of some leaders. When the BJP's adjournment motion was turned down by Speaker CP Joshi, BJP MLAs gathered near the Speakers' podium and shouted slogans. In the commotion that followed, BJP MLA Madan Dilawar was singled out for his poor behaviour and was suspended for seven days from the Assembly.

In New Delhi, the BJP demanded a high level probe into the incidents. "The Congress government is resorting to all means to stay in power. To save government, CM Gehlot is taking recourse to even tapping phones," BJP spokesperson Rajyavardhan Rathore said while addressing the media.