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ಪತ್ರಿಕೆಯ ಹೆಸರು : NAME OF THE NEWS PAPER: The Hindu

ದಿನಾಂಕ : DATE 20/1/2021

Budget session to have Question Hour

It was suspended in the monsoon session as a COVID-19 precautionary measure

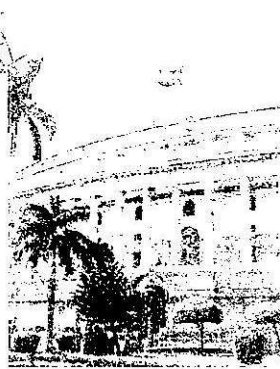
SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

The Question Hour, which had been suspended by the government during the monsoon session, will resume when Parliament meets for the Budget session from January 29.

The government had claimed that the suspension of the Question Hour, which gives the Opposition an opportunity to hold the government accountable, was an additional precautionary measure to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic.

The suspension had been strongly criticised by the Opposition.

As during the monsoon session, the Rajya Sabha and



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the Lok Sabha will meet at alternate sessions to ensure that all the three chambers – Rajya Sabha hall, Lok Sabha hall and the Central Hall – were available for both

Houses to seat members in keeping with the physical distancing norms.

Between sessions

The Rajya Sabha will meet from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. and the Lok Sabha in the second half from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. The two hours between the sessions will be used to sanitise the area.

At a press conference on Tuesday, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said, "Question Hour will be allowed during Parliament session for an already fixed time of one hour."

Parliamentarians will sit in all the three chambers when President Ram Nath Kovind addresses the joint

session of Parliament at the start of the session.

Mr. Birla said all MPs will be requested to undergo a COVID-19 test before the start of the Budget session. The Lok Sabha Speaker said all the arrangements had been made for RT-PCR tests to be done near their residences too.

Mr. Birla said food served in Parliament canteens for MPs and visitors will cost more as the subsidy allotted for it has been withdrawn, though he did not clarify the financial implications of the move.

The subsidy on food supplied at the canteen cost nearly ₹8 crore, senior Lok Sabha officials said.