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# Suspension of MPs unfortunate: Birla

Dignity of the House and its Chair is an important aspect of Parliamentary system, says Speaker

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Friday termed the chain of events leading to the suspension of eight Opposition members in the Rajya Sabha on Monday and the subsequent boycott of both Houses of Parliament by the Opposition "unfortunate".

The "dignity of the House and its Chair" was "an important aspect of the Parliamentary system and it is the duty of all members to respect it," Mr. Birla noted at a press conference in New Delhi.

The tradition of Parliament was not to refer to the goings-on in the other House, but that it would suffice to say that the events thereof had been unfortunate, he said.

Mr. Birla, however, observed that the boycott of the Lok Sabha by the Opposition

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OM BIRLA, LOK SABHA SPEAKER



was largely under political compulsions. "In the Lok Sabha, the Opposition has largely extended cooperation to the Chair in the peaceful conduct of the House, and the boycott was, as I understand it, under an act of political compulsion," he said.

"I had asked the leaders of the Opposition parties in the Lok Sabha to tea after they announced the boycott, and tried to persuade them to reconsider at least for the last

sitting, but these were decisions taken under political compulsions."

## Unprecedented event

The suspended Rajya Sabha members had, in an unprecedented event, gone on an overnight strike within the Parliament premises after their suspension was announced by House Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu.

Deputy Chairperson Harivansh, who had been at the receiving end of the Opposi-

tion fury in the House and who was accused of passing the substantive Farm related Bills in the House without division and without the House being in order, had also undertaken a day-long fast.

The Opposition in the Lok Sabha, where the Bills were cleared prior to being tabled in the Rajya Sabha and that too with more than five hours debate, had boycotted the proceedings in solidarity with the eight suspended MPs.

Mr. Birla, while giving details of the productivity of the Lok Sabha, said that it had breached a record on that score, with 167% productivity. Members, through various avenues open to them, had debated various important issues.

## LAC crisis

Asked why the border stand-

off with China was not debated in the House, he said COVID-19 was the most challenging problem facing the country and that issue had been debated not just during a general debate on the issue but also during debates on amendments to the Epidemic Diseases Act.

The construction work on a new Parliament complex had almost started and would be completed in 21 months. The Lok Sabha Secretariat was prepared to hold both the winter session and Budget session of Parliament, he stated.

While the Rajya Sabha Secretariat saw 83 staffers contracting COVID-19 during the monsoon session, Mr. Birla, while admitting that the Lok Sabha Secretariat had not escaped the disease, refused to disclose any numbers, terming such disclosure "unseemly."