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Jallianwala
Bagh bill gets
LS approval

NEW DELHI, GHNS: Amid stiff opposition, the Narendra Modi government on Friday got a bill passed by the Lok Sabha to remove the Congress president as the trustee of the Jallianwala Bagh National Memorial Trust.

The move comes over a century after the grand old party formed the trust and also purchased land for the memorial in commemoration of the brutal massacre of civilians by the British in Amritsar.

The Jallianwala Bagh National Memorial (Amendment) Bill, 2019, piloted by Culture Minister Prahlad Singh Patel, was passed by a voice vote.

A move by the Opposition to stall the bill at the stage of its consideration was defeated by a division of 214 votes against it and 30 in its favour.

"This bill has been brought in to nationalise the Jallianwala Bagh National Memorial and do away with the politicisation of the memorial. The money that the Congress invested in it was raised from the people," the culture minister said, before moving the bill for passage in the Lok Sabha.

The debate on the bill, which went on for more than three hours, saw acrimonious exchange of words between the members of the treasury benches and the Congress.

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Demanding withdrawal of the bill, Congress member from Amritsar Gurjeet Aujla accused the government of bringing it "to distort and destroy" the history of the country and the Congress.

"You cannot remove the sacrifice of the Congress to the country's freedom struggle. You have no contribution to the freedom fight. Why do you want to control the memorial," he asked, attacking the BJP and the Sangh Parivar.

The BJP members reacted sharply as Aujla referred to top RSS leaders and ideologues while targeting the saffron party.

Harsimrat hits back

Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leader and Union Minister Harsimrat Kaur Badal hit back at the Congress, saying the grandfather of the Punjab chief minister had congratulated General Dyer who led the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

Kaur's remark evoked angry

reaction from the Congress as she also raked up the 1984 anti-Sikh riots to target the party.

DMK member Dayanidi Maran called it "a shameful day" and demanded the withdrawal of the bill, urging the government to "be magnanimous" and spare "the legacy" of the Congress.

"Please do not try to rewrite history," TMC member Sugata Roy said.

BJD member B Mehtab also opposed the bill, saying it won't do any harm if the Congress president remained a member of the trust.

"Let us not belittle ourselves by removing the Congress president," Mehtab said.

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