

13. House can select Dy.Speaker

Om Birla makes it clear that it is for the Lok Sabha to fill the vacant post -Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said that if there is a provision for the post of Deputy Speaker in the Lok Sabha, then it was only obvious that there should be one, but it was not the Speaker's job to appoint one, and that the Deputy Speaker was chosen by the House.

His comments come against the backdrop of renewed efforts by Opposition parties in urging the government to fill the Deputy Speaker's position, which has been vacant for the past 15 months. The Congress has been angling for the post with the party's Lok Sabha floor leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury urging the Speaker to fulfil the Constitutional mandate given to him.

There is a necessity: Leaders of all political parties have the right to express their views. It is for the government to act upon this. Mr.Birla said reaching to Mr.Chowdary's letter. Asked if he felt that a Deputy Speaker was needed, he said. If there is a provision for such a post, then obviously there is a necessity for it.

The Rajya Sabha mean while, has already commenced the procedure to elect the Deputy Chairman for the upper council. It is not for the Speaker to appoint a Deputy Speaker. It is for the House to do so, Mr Birla added.

Mr.Birla said that the Parliament is meeting at a time when the whole world has been challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic. Holding the monsoon session was a challenge during the pandemic but we have to fulfil our Constitutional responsibilities. We want Parliament to become more accountable and answerable to the people he said.

Mr.Birla was speaking to presspersons ahead of the unprecedented session that will for the first time in Indian parliamentary history have some members sit outside the chambers.

According to sources, 20 Lok Sabha members have tested positive for SARS CoV-2. So far, out of these 20 MPs, 14 have recovered. Five others are still positive but out of danger. Unfortunately, we lost Kanyakumari MP H.Vasanthkumar, a senior Lok Sabha official said.

Safety measures: Every person including MPs, will need to get an RTPCR (reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction) test done prior to the session. No visitors or staff members of an MP will be allowed on the premises.

A host of measures have been taken to ensure that physical distancing is maintained. Each of the seats, and each row, in the Lok Sabha have been separated by polycarbonate sheets.

In the Lok Sabha chamber, only 257 members will be accommodated. Another 172 will be accommodated in various galleries in the House. A total of 111 members will have to participate in the debate from the Rajya Sabha chamber.

Communication lines have been laid to ensure they can make interventions and deliver speeches from the Rajya Sabha chamber.

To tackle the unusual situation for the first time ever. LED screens in both Houses of Parliament will have a real-time transmission from the other House.

The Lok Sabha Secretariat has marked out the places for each of the political parties, and it is for the parties themselves to decide which of their members gets to sit in the main hall and who will have to sit in the galleries or in Rajya Sabha.

The members who will sit in the galleries will not be able to speak from their seat. Instead, special podiums have been erected in the galleries for their use. This also means that most of the spontaneous interventions and protests would not be possible in the new setting for those sitting in the galleries.

To minimise contact between the members, the Lok Saba Secretariat has also launched a special mobile application named Attendance Register for the members. The app utilises GPS and face recognition systems. Members can mark their attendance only when they are present within the Parliament premises.

Om Birla,
Hon'ble Speaker, Loksabha,
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