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Lok Sabha suspends 7 Congress MPs for rest of Budget session

Action after 'gross misconduct and utter disregard' for House rules

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI

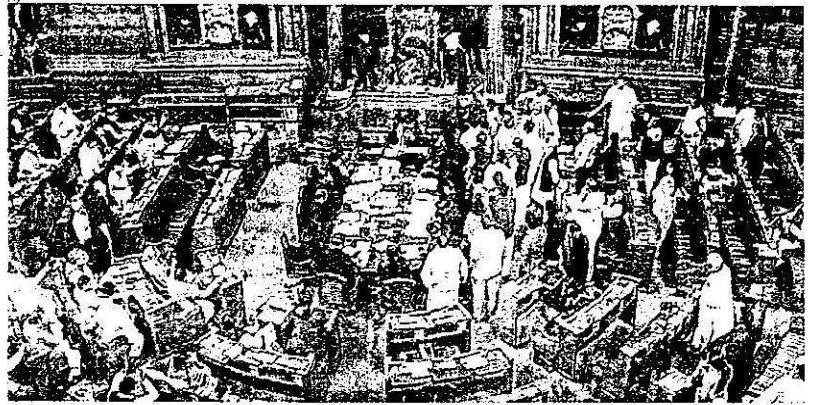
The Lok Sabha on Thursday suspended seven Congress members for the remaining period of the Budget session for "gross misconduct and utter disregard" for House rules after Opposition MPs snatched papers from the Speaker's table.

As soon as the House reassembled at 3 p.m. following an adjournment, Meenakshi Lekhi, who was in the chair, named Gaurav Gogoi, T.N. Prathapan, Dean Kuriakose, Manicka Tagore, Rajmohan Unnithan, Benny Behanan and Gurjeet Singh Aujla.

Calling it "unprecedented", Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi said the government was in favour of an inquiry committee on the incident and was even going to push for the termination of "the Congress MP's membership who had actually snatched the papers meant for Rama Devi, the presiding officer at 2 p.m."

The reference is to Assam MP Mr. Gogoi as he is seen picking up a paper from the Speaker's table and throwing it away when the post-lunch commotion happened.

Mr. Joshi said that though the government had assured



Unruly scenes: Opposition MPs staging a protest when BJP MP Meenakshi Lekhi was conducting the proceedings in the Lok Sabha on Thursday. ■■

that a discussion on Delhi riots would be held on March 11, the Congress remained adamant and did not allow the House to function.

'Open for discussion'

"The government had clearly said before the session that we want to clear two ordinances and the financial business, including demand for grants, and are open to discuss anything. The Delhi riots will of course be discussed and a date had been agreed upon by all," he told presspersons.

Earlier, the Minister moved a motion to suspend the Congress members from

the House until the end of the Budget session (April 3) as soon as the Lok Sabha reconvened at 3 p.m.

Ms. Lekhi said when the House was discussing the Mineral Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2020, some members "forcibly snatched and tossed papers" from the Speaker's podium.

"Such an unfortunate incident has possibly happened for the first time in parliamentary history... I condemn this behaviour," she said, before putting the Minister's motion to vote. The motion was passed by voice vote amid protests by the Opposition and soon after,

the House was adjourned for the day.

The Lok Sabha witnessed multiple adjournments through the day, first over the Opposition's demand for an immediate discussion on Delhi riots and then for the suspension of Rajasthan's Rashtriya Loktantrik Party MP and BJP ally, Hanuman Beniwal, over his controversial remarks against Congress president Sonia Gandhi and her family members while talking about the 'spread of coronavirus from Italy'. This prompted BJP member Rajendra Agarwal to abruptly adjourn the House for the lunch break.