

# CAB passed in Parliament amid protests

DH - 12/12/2019

**Amit Shah junks Oppn charges, says bill not against Muslims**

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NEW DELHI, DHNS**

Parliament on Wednesday put its stamp of approval on the controversial Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2019 that sailed through the Rajya Sabha after Union Home Minister Amit Shah trashed Opposition charges of playing "divisive politics" and "wrecking with the Constitution".

While 125 members from the treasury benches and BJP allies voted in favour of the draft law, the Opposition camp could muster only 99 votes. A second resolution to send the legislation to a Select Committee for another round of examination was also defeated by a margin of 124-99 votes. The Lok Sabha had passed the bill on Monday.

The contentious bill received Parliament's accord at a time when violence erupted in the northeastern states on the apprehension that the legislation might be misused to change the unique demographic profiles of the seven states. Responding to the Opposition charges, Shah said the bill did not violate any of the provisions of the Constitution and would stand the scrutiny of the court.

"Since there is no provision

## Assam smoulders: Curfew on, Internet off

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Assam witnessed widespread violence on Wednesday as thousands of protesters came out on the streets against the contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Bill.

The state smouldered with protests as demonstrators went on a rampage, torching vehicles and pelting stones, following which the Assam police clamped a curfew in Guwahati for an indefinite period. The government also imposed restrictions on mobile internet for the next 24 hours.

The Centre airlifted 5,000 paramilitary per-

sonnel to the northeastern states for maintenance of law and order.

Police fired tear gas shells and water cannons on students who set a bus on fire in front of the Assam Secretariat. The situation remained tense in Tripura too.

Mobile internet suspended for 24 hours from 7 pm on Wednesday

At least 24 trains cancelled/short-terminated

2 railway stations, bus set ablaze

At least four columns of army were requisitioned, two each for Kanchanpur and Manu-gram in Tripura, and Dibrugarh and Bongaigaon in Assam.

Northeastern states are against the "communal bill" which, they say, will allow illegal migrants to become Indian citizens and reduce the indigenous population into minorities in their own land.

in the bill to take away anyone's citizenship, why should Indian Muslims fear it? Muslims should not be scared and you (Opposition parties) should not scare them," he said.

He said it was required because Pakistan didn't obey the 1950 Liaquat-Nehru Pact that recognised religious freedom for the minority community.

Explaining why Pakistan,

Bangladesh and Afghanistan were considered in the bill, Shah said the law was meant to address the specific issue of religious persecution being faced by the religious minority (Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian) in these three nations in India's neighbourhood.

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"When nationality was given to Sri Lankan refugees, the same was not given to Bangladeshi citizens.

When people from Uganda fled and came to India, they were given citizenship. Each time a particular crisis was addressed by the government," Shah said.

Summing up the Opposition offensive, senior Congress leader and Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Ghulam Nabi Azad said while Shah brought the bill claiming victimisation of lakhs, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs in 2017 informed Parliament that it had no authentic record of people who migrated to India from the neighbouring states on grounds of religious persecution.

In his counter, Shah said that it was natural for those who migrated from the three neighbouring countries to hide their true citizenship status in the absence of a law that would protect them.

"Once the bill becomes a law, they will come out of the shadow and we will get the numbers."

The minister also asserted that neither the citizenship bill, nor the previously passed legislation of making the practice of triple talaq punishable and the scrapping Article 370 were anti-Muslim.

Attacking the Congress for double-speak, Shah said that the party, during its tenure, had given Indian citizenship to 13,000 Hindus and Sikhs from Pakistan without raising a word about the same for other communities.

Asked by Congress' Pratap Singh Bajwa on whether Ahmadiya Muslims, who were denounced by Pakistan, could get Indian citizenship, Shah said that even though the CAB was for six specific religious minorities, the Narendra Modi government had granted citizenship to 566 Muslims in the past five years.