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30

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# Govt. refuses demands to restore MPLADS funds

## Opposition MPs raise issue amid debate on salary cuts Bill

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The Lok Sabha on Tuesday passed the Salary, Allowances and Pension of Members of Parliament (Amendment) Bill, 2020, which seeks to cut salaries of MPs by 30%. The debate however saw the entire Opposition uniting to ask for a concomitant restitution of the Members of Parliament Local Area Development (MPLADs) fund which the Centre froze for two financial years till 2022 as an austerity measure.

Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Pralhad Joshi, steering the Bill, thanked MPs for the bipartisan support but kept mum on the question of restitution of MPLADs, despite almost every non-treasury bench speaker demanding it. Dean of the House, Mr. Saugata Roy, moved a resolution before the debate on the Bill, stat-



Pralhad Joshi

ing his disapproval of the Bill without any restitution of MPLADs.

DMK MP Kalanidhi Veeraswamy spoke on the need for MPLADs as a fund sensitive to local developmental needs. "The cut in salary will raise a maximum of ₹54 crores, while the Union government is set to spend ₹20,000 crore for a new Parliament, a needless expense at this time of austerity and crisis," Mr. Veeraswamy said.

Tribhuvan Congress MP Saugata Roy pointed out that

the government had not allocated the last tranche of the funds due for 2019-20. "I had allocated ₹50 lakh for a COVID-19 hospital in my constituency from the funds due from 2019-20 financial year but even that has not been disbursed by the government," he said. "Even BJP MPs feel this way but since Prime Minister Modi has 303 MPs in the Lok Sabha, he doesn't value their opinion," he added.

The BJD and the YSRCP echoed these sentiments. Pinaki Mishra of the BJD said, "It is not our fund; it is a fund for the people, by the people, of the people."

At this, N.K. Premachandran of the Revolutionary Socialist Party, who was occupying the presiding officer's chair, said the sentiments expressed by Mr. Mishra were per se "the sense of the House".