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Justice Gogoi takes oath amid slogans, walkout

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Former chief justice of India Ranjan Gogoi took oath as Rajya Sabha MP on Thursday amid unprecedented sloganeering and walkout by Opposition MPs who were objecting to his appointment.

This is the first time in the Parliament's 69-year-old history that oath-taking was marred by protests and walkouts. After the oath-taking, Gogoi told reporters, "they will welcome me very soon, there are no critics."

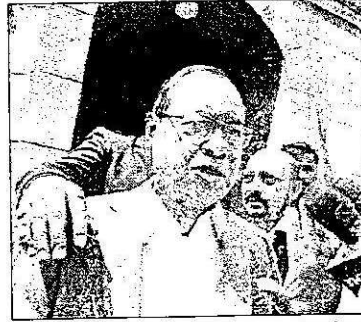
As soon as Gogoi's name was called, Congress MP and CPM MPs were on their feet raising slogans against the former chief justice who was appointed a nominated MP by President Ram Nath Kovind on Monday night.

These MPs were soon joined by DMK, Muslim League and MDMK among others while Samajwadi Party MPs remained seated. Trinamool Congress MPs were not present in the House.

Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu said it was "very unfair" and it was not the way to behave. Gogoi then took oath in English, in the name of God, amid slogans and walkouts.

After this Naidu said, "You know the Constitutional provision, you know the precedent, you know the power of the President (to nominate a member to Rajya Sabha). We should not do anything in the House. Whatever views you have, you can say it outside."

Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad described the protests as "grossly unfair" and said, "This House has a great



Former CJI Ranjan Gogoi leaves after taking oath as Rajya Sabha member, in New Delhi, on Thursday. PTI

tradition of having many eminent persons from diverse fields, including former chief justices nominated by those who have shouted today."

"Hon'ble member Gogoi, who has taken the oath today, will surely contribute his best as a nominated member. And it was grossly unfair to do like this," he added. Outside the House, Congress Deputy Leader Anand Sharma told reporters that the appointment and Gogoi's acceptance have raised "bonafide questions about quid pro quo" and that he had "no hesitation" in saying he was a "controversial chief justice of India" who has "severely undermined the independence of the judiciary."

Sharma added that Gogoi's nomination and that of some of his predecessors' entry into the Rajya Sabha "six to seven years" after their retirement should not be compared as the former has taken the new position within four months of his retirement.