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# RTI Amendment Bill sees vociferous protests in LS

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE @ New Delhi

THE RTI Amendment Bill 2019, which was introduced in Parliament on Friday, has ruffled a few feathers. The Bill will allow the Centre to decide the salary and service conditions of the Central and state information commissioners, and also seeks to take away the stature of information commissioners from equivalent of election commissioners.

The move evoked strong protests by the Opposition members in the Lower House and was equally criticised by RTI activists. Both, the Opposition members as well as RTI activists have claimed that the Bill is an attempt to take away the autonomy of the institution.

While protesting during the introduction of the Bill, Congress leader of the House, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said, "The amendments to the legislation can prove to be dangerous to the fundamental rights of the citizens." He quoted a standing commission report that said that it will undermine and pressurise the Information Commission. Shashi Tharoor of the Congress called the Bill "RTI elimination Bill".

Asaduddin Owaisi of the AIMIM said the Bill lacks competence because it undermines the powers of the State.

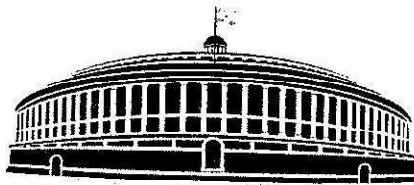
Earlier, introducing the Bill, minister Jitendra Singh said it aims at institutionalisation, streamlining and ease of delivery of RTI Act.

## Lok Sabha passes NHRC amendment Bill

The Lok Sabha on Friday passed amendments to National Human Rights Commission Bill that curtails the tenure of the chairperson and members from the current five to three years. The Bill stipulates that former Supreme Court and high court judges could also become members of the NHRC. Currently, former CJIs could become the members and chairperson of the body.



Railway Minister Piyush Goyal walks towards Parliament main gate after a faulty security alarm went off | SHEKHAR YADAV



## RTI AMENDMENT BILL

### GOVERNMENT CONTENTION

The functions of the Election Commission of India and the Central and State Information Commissions are different.

The mandate of Election Commission of India and Central and State Information Commissions are different.

Their status and service conditions need to be rationalized accordingly.

### OPPOSITION VIEW

The draft law is a threat to independence of Central Information Commissioner (CIC).

It is actually "RTI elimination bill" removing two greater powers of institutional independence.

## RTI ACTIVISTS' APPREHENSION

The move will take away independence of the Commissions, highest adjudicating bodies in the matter of the RTI Act.

## NHRC BILL

### GOVT CONTENTION

The legislation will help in protecting human rights more effectively

The bill gives more administrative and financial powers to national and state human rights panels

The new legislation will make the rights bodies more representative

### OPPN VIEW

The Bill has many gaps and is not in conformity with the Paris Principles — a set of international standards which frame and guide the work of the national human rights institutions

It undermines the autonomy issue of the rights bodies

## Naidu pulls up absentee minister

Days after PM Narendra Modi expressed his displeasure about ministers and

MPs not attending the House, Rajya Sabha Chairman and Vice-President M

Venkalah Naidu on Friday pulled up Muzaffarnagar MP and MoS,

Animal Husbandry, Fisheries and Dairy Sanjiv Kumar Balyan skipping the House. "Mantriji,

day before yesterday your name was there in the agenda.

But when called, you were not there. Please note that it should not happen in future," Naidu said.