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PAPER CLIPPINGS

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## SPG Bill passed amid Opposition walkout

JH - 08/11/2019

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The Lok Sabha on Wednesday passed the Special Protection Group (Amendment) Bill, 2019 which will now protect only the Prime Minister and members of his immediate family residing with him at his official residence.

It will also provide securi-

ty to former Prime Ministers and their immediate family members staying with them at the residence allotted for a period of five years from the date on which they cease to hold office.

The Opposition walked out during the voting on the Bill.

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Replying to the debate in the Lower House, Home Minister Amit Shah said that with this amendment, his government would restore the original intent of the Act, which was to provide security for the Prime Minister.

He said: "The people of the country should know that the security of Congress president Sonia Gandhi and her children Rahul and Priyanka has not been withdrawn but changed to 'Z-plus' with advance security liaison and ambulance that will be given across the country."

Refuting any charges of the move being a "political vendetta", Mr. Shah said: "The BJP does not carry out any action with a vindictive approach. It was the Con-

gress which took many such decisions in the past. The term 'special' indicates its [the Special Protection Group's] special purpose. Many countries have such elite and compact cover exclusively for their respective heads of state."

He said that when the SPG cover of former Prime Ministers Chandra Shekhar, I.K. Gujral and Manmohan Singh was withdrawn, "no one uttered a word".

Opposing the Bill, MP N. K. Premachandran said: "If there is any security threat, they [former PMs] have to be protected. Kindly don't play politics in this issue."

A. Raja of the DMK claimed that the amendment was being undertaken for political reasons.