

No Question Hour in monsoon session

Centre for Zero Hour after Opposition protests

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The upcoming Monsoon Session of Parliament beginning September 14 will not have the Question Hour, and a shorter duration for members to raise matters of public importance. This has prompted the Opposition to accuse the government of "murdering de-

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mocracy". The four-day-long monsoon session will be marked by several firsts such as sittings of both the House on Saturdays and Sundays, staggered timings for the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha instead of simultaneous proceedings and strict restrictions on Parliament premises.

"There will be no Question

Hour and private members' business during the session," a Rajya Sabha notification said.

Opposition parties, including Congress, Trinamool, DMK, had attacked the Modi government for scrapping the Question Hour and snatching the right of members to question the government.

Facing criticism from the Opposition, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi said he had suggested to the Lok Sabha Speaker and Rajya Sabha Chairman to allow Zero Hour during the session and permit unstarred questions. Members raise matters of urgent public importance during the Zero Hour.

Not running away from debate in Parliament: Pralhad Joshi

Under attack from the Opposition, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi on Wednesday said the Modi government was not running away from debates and all political parties except the Trinamool had agreed to drop the Question Hour during the monsoon session of Parliament.

Joshi said holding the Question Hour during the truncated monsoon session of Parliament would have led to crowding in the officers' gallery as ministry officials have to be present to assist the ministers.

"All political parties except Trinamool had agreed to drop the Question Hour," the minister said terming the Opposition criticism of the government as "unfair".

On the first day of the monsoon session, the Lok Sabha will meet from 9.00 am to 1.00 pm and the Rajya Sabha from 3.00

pm to 7.00 pm. For the rest of the duration of the session till October 1, the Rajya Sabha would meet in the mornings and Lok Sabha in the afternoon.

The two-hour break between will be used to disinfect chambers of both the Houses.

However, the decision to scrap the Question Hour and private members' business has not gone down well with the Opposition.

"Opposition MPs lose the right to question the government. A first since 1950? Parliament overall working hours remain the same so why cancel Question Hour? Pandemic excuse to murder democracy," Trinamool Congress leader Derek

O'Brien said.

Congress leader in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury had already written a letter to Speaker Om Birla protesting the decision to scrap the Question Hour.

"We request the government to reconsider the decision," Chowdhury said adding that Defence Minister Rajnath Singh had sounded him out before hand about the changes citing the Covid-19 pandemic.

"BJP government's decision to suspend the Question Hour for the entire session conveys just one message — even elected representatives have no right to question the government," DMK member Kanimozhi said