

ಪತ್ರಿಕೆ : ಲೋಕಸಭಾ

ವರ್ಗ / ವಿಷಯ : DEPARTMENT / SUBJECT

ಪತ್ರಿಕೆ ಹೆಸರು : NAME OF THE NEWSPAPER: The Hindu

ಕ್ರಮ : DATE: 7/12/19

House erupts over Unnao rape victim's plight

Government demands apology from two Congress members for 'threatening behaviour' towards Minister Smriti Irani

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The Lok Sabha had to be adjourned for the day on Friday over the government's insistence on an unqualified apology from two members of the Congress for their "threatening behaviour" towards Union Minister Smriti Irani when she was speaking on the burning of a rape victim in Unnao, Uttar Pradesh.

Later, the BJP moved a motion in Speaker Om Birla's office to suspend Congress members T.N. Prathapan and D. Kuriakose, if they did not apologise for taking "a threatening demeanour" to-

wards Ms. Irani. "This is the most condemnable behaviour. They came in threatening position...when she was speaking," Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi said when the House assembled after lunch.

Though Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury got up to reply, Mr. Joshi insisted on the presence of the two MPs from Kerala. Finally, BJP MP Meenakshi Lekhi, who was in the chair, adjourned the House for the day.

It all started during the Zero Hour, when Mr. Chowdhury referred to the incident of a rape victim having been



Leading the charge: Woman and Child Welfare Minister Smriti Irani speaking in the Lok Sabha on Friday. • PTI

burnt in Unnao and said there "are plans to build a grand Ram temple while Sita is being burnt". He said Uttar Pradesh had become 'ad-

harm pradesh' (lawless State).

"The Hyderabad police shot the rapists when they tried to flee, whereas in Uttar

Pradesh, the police allowed them to be free on bail. That is why they got a chance to burn the victim," he said.

Things turned volatile when Ms. Irani, the MP from Amethi in Uttar Pradesh, accused the Opposition of "communalising and politicising" the incident. She questioned Saugata Roy of the Trinamool Congress for not referring to a similar case in Malda in West Bengal. During the West Bengal panchayat election, "rape was used as a political weapon", she said.

As she continued, the two Congress MPs entered the

aisle and charged towards the treasury benches.

In the Rajya Sabha, the Congress questioned Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "silence" on the Unnao incident. Amee Yajnik said women were in panic as the data from the National Crime Records Bureau showed that crimes against women had increased. "The Prime Minister tweets on different topics. But he did not give any statement on Unnao. The Women and Child Development Minister did not make a statement. The Home Minister did not ask for any report. Why is it so," she asked.