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Curtail House session, MPs request Om Birla

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Lok Sabha members from the poll-bound States of West Bengal, Assam, Tamil Nadu and Kerala and the Union Territory of Puducherry have requested that the second part of the Budget session that began on Monday be curtailed.

Sources said nearly 145 MPs have written to Speaker Om Birla. The government is mulling over closing the session by March 25. Though there is no official announcement so far, both Houses are set to restore pre-COVID-19 timings and seating arrangement.

For the first time in a year, members of both Houses will sit in their respective chambers instead of being spread across the two chambers.

Sources said the pre-COVID-19 timings and seating arrangement were being restored to provide more time to each House so that the Budget session can be wrapped up before schedule, as per the demand of the MPs.

The MPs will, however, continue to sit in the galleries of the chamber to maintain physical distance as per the COVID-19 protocol.

On Monday, during the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) of the Lok Sabha, floor leaders of various parties advanced the same view. The Trinamool Congress and DMK leaders were not present at the meeting.

Mr. Birla met some leaders one-on-one to get a sense of the situation. Sources said he would ar-

rive at a decision only after ascertaining the "sense of the House" on the matter.

While the Shiv Sena said it would go with whatever the government decided, the YSRCP was one of the few parties that felt that the days lost, in case the session is cut short, should be made up for.

2011 & 2008 precedents

The Trinamool Congress, in letters addressed to both Rajya Sabha Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu and Mr. Birla, referred to the 2011 and 2008 precedents, when the session was similarly curtailed. In the letter to Mr. Naidu, Trinamool Congress national spokesperson and Rajya Sabha floor leader Derek O'Brien said due to the election, the MPs of his party would not be able to attend the Parliament session.

He cited the 222nd session in 2011, which started on February 21 and was scheduled to conclude on April 21. But it was adjourned *sine die* on March 25 due to the Assembly elections in Assam, Kerala, Puducherry, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal.

He also referred to the 214th session in 2008, which commenced on October 17 and was adjourned early on October 24 to meet again on December 10. The session, as per the original schedule, was to continue up to November 21. However, it was adjourned early due to Assembly elections.

"I am optimistic that you will consider this proposal of ours," Mr. O'Brien said.