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## 'Parliament doesn't have space to ensure physical distancing'

Secretaries-General brief LS Speaker and RS Chairman

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT  
NEW DELHI

Both Houses of Parliament do not have space to accommodate members while strictly adhering to physical distancing norms, Rajya Sabha Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla were told by the Secretaries-General of the Houses at a meeting here on Tuesday, sources said.

According to the sources, by a review done by the Parliament Secretariat, the Rajya Sabha hall can have 60 MPs while keeping enough distance between each member, and the Lok Sabha hall has space for a little over

100 members. The secretariat had been weighing on moving the Rajya Sabha to the Lok Sabha hall, while moving Lok Sabha members to the Central Hall, which is used for the joint sittings of Parliament. "Even if the members are accommodated in the visitors' and press galleries, the total seating capacity would be much less than that required...", an official said.

The seating capacity at the Vigyan Bhavan, which is a facility used for national conferences, was also reviewed, but it has been ruled out. "Another option discussed was to enable attendance in both Houses of

only those many members who can be accommodated as per the social distancing norm by drawing up lists of such members whose participation in various items of business is required on a daily basis," the official added. However, the Opposition is likely to resist any such move to curtail the entry of members during a session for paucity of space:

Both Mr. Naidu and Mr. Birla for now have ruled out using webcast for holding virtual meetings of the parliamentary committees, saying it would need change of rules, which has to be approved by both Houses of Parliament.