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Disruptions in Parliament: A case of dissent or indiscipline?

In 2010, seven MPs were suspended for creating unruly scenes over Women's Reservation Bill

ANAND MISHRA
NEW DELHI, DHNS

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It was a repeat of 2010 incident when eight Rajya Sabha MPs of Opposition parties were suspended on Monday for the Sunday ruckus in the Upper House for their noisy protest against the two contentious farm bills passed by the Upper House.

In 2010, seven MPs belong-

ing to RJD, JDU, LJP and Samajwadi Party were suspended for creating unruly scenes in the House while opposing the Women's Reservation Bill. The motion then moved by UPA's minister Prithviraj Chavan under Rule 256 was adopted by a voice vote.

Even then, the charge was a disregard for the dignity of the Council and authority of the Chair. While this time the

suspended MPs of the House sat on demonstration near Gandhi statue in the Parliament precincts, the MPs in 2010 had created quite a spectacle sitting on the ground in the Upper House after the Chairman had announced their suspension.

On both occasions, the use of marshals to evict the MPs raised questions about the democratic functioning of the House. This is not limited to only Rajya Sabha. Lok Sabha also has repeatedly recorded such incidents, raising allegations of "intolerance" and "lack of democracy".

In March 2020, Lok Sabha

speaker Om Birla suspended seven Congress MPs including Gaurav Gogoi for the rest of the budget session after they created a ruckus protesting against the communal violence in Delhi, demanding the resignation of home minister Amit Shah and discussions in both Houses of the Parliament.

Gogoi was also among the six Congress MPs suspended from attending the House in July 2017 for five days for throwing papers at the Chair. They were protesting after their demand for an adjournment motion to discuss incidents of lynching was disallowed. The repeated disruptions in Houses had led

to a demand for setting up of evolving a 'Parliamentary disruption index', an idea that emerged at a conference of Presiding Officers of Legislative bodies in November 2019 in Dehradun, mooted by the current Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha Harishankh.

A 'code of conduct' for members of Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, state Assemblies and Councils to minimise disruptions in the House especially relating to suspension for entering and protesting in the well of the House, was also deliberated upon.

In July last year, the rule review committee chaired by

Rajya Sabha Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu mooted automatic suspension of members creating ruckus in the House. In February this year, Lok Sabha contemplated the idea of a new stricter law to check disruptions in the House.

While temporary suspensions of members have been occurring now and then, the frequency has risen in the last 10 years—all the more in the last three years due to the polarised nature of politics between the BJP and the rest of the Opposition.

In the last six years, at least a dozen of such suspensions have taken place in both Houses.