

Lok Sabha passes two Bills amid protests by Opposition

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Both Houses of Parliament saw repeated adjournments on Monday, as Opposition members continued their protests over allegations of snooping using the Israeli spyware Pegasus and the controversial agricultural reform laws.

The Lok Sabha was adjourned for the day after it cleared two Bills, amid the din. The Factoring Regulation (Amendment) Bill, 2020, and the National Institutes of Food Technology, Entrepreneurship and Management Bill, 2021, were passed by voice vote.

The proceedings of the Rajya Sabha were adjourned five times before being called off early for the day, as Opposition members continued raising slogans against the government.

Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu said the persistent disruptions had cost the members their opportunity to raise issues of public importance. Mr. Naidu said important matters about COVID-19 vaccines, the alleged attacks on press freedom and even the chance to seek clarifications from the government on the Pegasus issue were denied. He said 57 matters raised by 63 members had been permitted last week but none of them could be taken up due to the disruptions. On Monday, too, there were 12 matters admitted for Zero Hour. "We are becoming helpless day by day," Mr. Naidu said.

In the Lok Sabha, discussions on the two Bills could not take place as the Opposition members raised slogans demanding a discussion on the Pegasus issue and the farmers' demand for the repeal of the three farm laws.

Rama Devi, who was chairing the proceedings, urged protesting members to return to their seats and

participate in the discussions. When that did not happen, she went ahead with the consideration and passing of the Bills.

Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Pralhad Joshi and Minister of State Arjun Ram Meghwal also urged members to return to their seats and participate in the discussions.

Factoring regulation

While Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman spoke before moving the Factoring Regulation Bill, giving a bit of background on why the amendments were being made, Food Processing Mi-

nister Pashupati Kumar Paras simply moved the Bill for consideration and passing.

The Factoring Bill, Ms. Sitharaman said, was for the benefit of the Medium and Small Scale Enterprises (MSME) and that the Bill had accepted all the changes suggested by the Standing Committee which went into its details.

Earlier in the day, the House saw repeated adjournments and when it met at 2 p.m. and ran for a few minutes, papers were laid on the table and Ms. Sitharaman introduced the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Bill, 2021.