

OPPOSITION DIVIDED, RAJYA SABHA PASSES BILL

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After a day of high drama in the Rajya Sabha, the Opposition lost the vote against the J&K Reorganisation Bill, 2019, with just 61 votes against versus 125 votes in favour, as three key opposition parties, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) supported the government, while a Congress ally, the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), chose to abstain.

The AAP, which has three members, was with the Opposition when it trooped inside the well in the morning, protesting the legislation. AAP's Sanjay Singh had even moved a motion to suspend business to discuss the Kashmir situation. But an afternoon tweet by Delhi CM and AAP convenor Arvind Kejriwal, saw the party change tack. "We support the government on its decisions on J&K. We hope this will bring peace and development in the state," Mr. Kejriwal posted on Twitter.

"Telugu Desam Party supports the Union Govt as it seeks to repeal Article 370. I pray for the peace and prosperity of the people of J&K," TDP chief Chandrababu Naidu tweeted. TDP has two members.

BSP President Mayawati is yet to explain her party's support for the bill. The BSP has four members.

JD(U) walks out

The parties which opposed the bill included the Congress, the DMK, the SP, the RJD, the CPI(M), the CPI, the Muslim League, the Kerala Congress and the MDMK. The Trinamool Congress (TMC) walked out at the last minute, just before voting. The Janata Dal (United), a key NDA ally, walked out in middle of the debate after opposing the legislation.

The AIADMK, Lok Jan Shakti Party, Republican Party of India, Akali Dal, Shiv Sena, YSR Congress, Telangana Rashtra Samithi and Biju Janata Dal all voted in support of the legislation.

Two MPs from the J&K Peoples Democratic Party, Nazir Ahmad Laway and Mir Mohammad Fayaz, were marshalled out for tearing the Constitution in the house.

Of the NCP's four members, only Vandana Chavan was present during the vote, and she abstained.

"From 11 a.m. we have been seeing procedural hara kiri and constitutional immorality," asserted TMC floor leader Derek O'Brien. "On behalf of TMC we can't see this any more. Our MPs are stuck in mid air somewhere. In anguish we walk out," Mr. O'Brien said.

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