

# POINT OF DISORDER: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON SUSPENSION OF 12 OPPOSITION MPS DURING WINTER SESSION 2021

Relevant for: Indian Polity | Topic: Parliament - structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these

The [suspension of 12 Opposition Members of Parliament](#) from the Rajya Sabha for the entire winter session of Parliament, evidently an extreme step by Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu, has turned the spotlight on the use of disruption of proceedings as a parliamentary tactic. The Government and the Opposition should try and work a way out of this situation, but that may not resolve the underlying affliction of perennial conflict between the two sides. A guiding principle of parliamentary proceedings is that the majority, i.e. the Government, will have its way, and the minority, the Opposition, will have its say. This principle has been observed in its violation in India for several years now. As the principal Opposition in the years leading up to 2014, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) [so disrupted Parliament](#) that a majority government was rendered dysfunctional for years; since 2014, in power, the BJP has tinkered with parliamentary processes in a way that the Opposition has been pinned down. Bills are passed in a hurry and even amidst din; the scrutiny of Bills by committees and debates are few and far between. Also, the decision to suspend Members for their conduct in the previous monsoon session at the beginning of a new session seems excessively punitive. This is no defence of disruption in general or the behaviour of the particular MPs, but the punishment is only worsening the conflict, and not facilitating debate.

Parliament is the platform where the executive is held accountable to the representatives of the people. That is where people's representatives raise matters of public concern and seek the Government's attention. The trend of weakening that process in the name of efficiency is not merely undermining the spirit of democracy; it is also landing the Government itself in a difficult spot as the mayhem that followed the hurried passage of three controversial farm laws last year shows. Parliamentary debates should not be viewed as a distraction or waste of time; they are a barometer of public mood and must be respected as such, by both the ruling side and the Opposition. Disruption as a brief, momentary reaction to a situation that demands debate is understandable, but as a sustained strategy, it is self-defeating. The absence of the Opposition will only leave the Government even more unchecked. It was the BJP's Arun Jaitley who theorised on [the legitimacy of disruptions as a parliamentary instrument](#). It is time to shun that idea. The Government must make amends to restore the function of Parliament by deferring to parliamentary mechanisms, and also through informal channels of communication with the Opposition.

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