

AMENDMENTS ON PEGASUS, COVID NOT ALLOWED

Relevant for: Indian Polity | Topic: The President and the Vice-President of India

House in order: Rajya Sabha Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu conducting proceedings in the House on Wednesday. PTI-

Amendments to the Motion of Thanks to the President that mentioned the government's alleged use of Pegasus spyware and its handling of the COVID-19 pandemic were not allowed to be moved in the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday.

The Motion of Thanks was moved and discussed in the House on Wednesday. A list of 99 amendments by Opposition members was allowed and 80 were actually moved due to some of the MPs not being present at the time. Two amendments by Communist Party of India (Marxist) member Elamaram Kareem, expressing regret that the President's Address to Parliament on January 31 did not mention Pegasus and the handling of COVID-19, were not allowed. On COVID-19, Mr. Kareem's amendment stated that the President's Address did not mention "the failure of the government in handling the COVID-19 pandemic, the unfortunate incident of floating of dead bodies in the holy rivers and the failure of the government in formulating an effective vaccine policy...".

The second amendment regretted that the address did not include mention of the "Government of India's engagement with the Israeli firm, NSO, and the State sponsored illegal surveillance over hundreds of journalists, activists, Opposition politicians, government officials, business executives and even judges of the apex court using Pegasus spyware".

Mr. Kareem tweeted on Wednesday that the government's intolerance was at its peak. "...MPs can't even present crucial amendments on motion of thanks to President's address. 1st list of amendments approved by "RSS" (Rajya Sabha Secretariat) got released. Amendments about Pegasus & gov's failure in dealing COVID are disallowed".

Earlier in the day, Rajya Sabha Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu informed the House that some notices under Rule 267 to raise issues, including the alleged use of Pegasus, had been received, but he had not allowed them.

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