

RAJYA SABHA APPROVES BILL EMPOWERING DELHI L-G

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Up in arms: A video grab of Congress MPs walking out amid voting on the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill in the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday. PTI

The Rajya Sabha on Wednesday passed the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill that seeks to empower the Lieutenant-Governor in Delhi. The Opposition, including the Aam Aadmi Party and the Congress, walked out just before the Bill was put to vote as a mark of protest. Earlier, the Biju Janata Dal, the Samajwadi Party and the YSR Congress had walked out.

During the division of votes for adopting the motion that the Bill be taken up for consideration, 83 members voted in favour and 45 against. Union Minister of State for Home G. Kishan Reddy said there was no political motive behind the Bill and it was brought only to clear the ambiguities.

The Bill states that the government in the national capital territory of Delhi means the "Lieutenant-Governor". The legislation says the L-G is "necessarily granted an opportunity" to give her/his opinion before any decision taken by the Council of Ministers (or the Delhi Cabinet) is implemented.

'No power taken away'

"When the Delhi government moved the Delhi Netaji Subhas University of Technology Bill in 2015, it said government means the L-G of Delhi, the Delhi government has already agreed to this... Not a single power of the Delhi government is being taken away. Delhi is a Union Territory, not a full-fledged State," Mr. Reddy said, responding to the debate. The proceedings saw vociferous protest by the Opposition members with the TMC and AAP accusing the government of "killing democracy". The House was adjourned twice.

Sanjay Singh of AAP said the Bill was akin to dismissing an elected government.

"Will you pass a Bill that gives all powers to the President of India? You are smothering an elected government. This Bill is akin to dismissing the government. We denied you nine stadiums to turn them into jails for farmers. This Bill is a revenge for that... The BJP has lost elections to [Arvind] Kejriwal twice and so it is targeting his government," Mr. Singh said.

Abhishek Manu Singhvi of the Congress said the Bill was unconstitutional. He said the Supreme Court judgment had stated that the "L-G of the State has more of an advisory role." He said the powers of the Delhi Assembly were being diluted systematically.

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