

## J&K BUDGET: OPPOSITION SLAMS 'TAXATION WITHOUT REPRESENTATION'

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

Keeping accounts: The Rajya Sabha during the second part of Budget session in New Delhi on Tuesday. PTI

The Rajya Sabha debated the J&K Budget on Tuesday at a time when there is not a single representative from the union territory (UT) forcing many Opposition members to quote American lawyer James Otis who said "taxation without representation is tyranny". The Opposition urged the Narendra Modi-led government to ensure that at least the next Budget is debated by the elected representatives of the former State.

Debating 'The Jammu and Kashmir Appropriation Bill, 2022', the Opposition pointed out that three years after dilution of the Article 370 and the J&K Reorganisation Bill was passed, there is no 'normalcy' in the former State. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharman will reply to the debate on Wednesday.

Congress member Vivek Tankha initiated the debate. He is a Kashmiri Pandit who was elected from the Upper House from Madhya Pradesh. "People from all parts of the country discuss the Budget. But Jammu and Kashmir people will not participate in the discussion. Besides the four members from Jammu & Kashmir are also not there in the House to discuss the Budget as there is no [legislative] Assembly there," he said.

He pointed out that in nearly six years now democracy has been suspended in the former State since it has either been under Governor's rule or President's rule. "Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh are part of the country. Crores of people live there. They have aspirations and a vision. If we pass the Budget without listening to the aspirations of the people then you can imagine their pain," he said and called for restoring the legislative Assembly there.

TMC MP Nadimul Haque said the high allocation for the police and security forces clearly shows that J&K has been converted into a "police state". "Contrary to the ruling party's claim, J&K is very very far from normalcy as we know it," he said.

RJD MP Manoj K Jha said mainstream of Kashmir has been killed in the last three years. He also spoke about the recent film *Kashmir Files* which the BJP and the government have gone out of the way to promote. "The wounds can heal only through conciliation not by pouring acid on them," he said.

Given the rhetoric from the ruling party on Kashmiri Pandits in the recent days, Shiv Sena MP Priyanka Chaturvedi said her question on how many Kashmiri Pandits have returned in the last seven years that this government has been in power remained unanswered.

Senior Congress leader Jairam Ramesh steering away from the political debate posed technical questions pointing out clumsy jugglery.

He asked, "The GST revenue is projected to double in one year. This is impressive but unprecedented. What gives Finance Minister and the formulators of this Budget confidence that the GST revenue will double in one year which has not happened anywhere? The expenditure

figure of Rs. 1,40,000 crore has not been clearly explained. He said the major source of revenue receipt is based on sale of state PSUs which are already in dire straits, so the assumptions that these units will sell is premature.

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