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Logjam ends; Parliament to debate Constitution

At meeting called by Speaker, ruling side agrees to allow certain controversial topics to be raised during Zero Hour; Congress decides not to cause any disruption over Adani indictment issue

Sreeparna Chakrabarty
NEW DELHI

In a breakthrough to end the logjam that had plagued the functioning of Parliament for over a week, the government and the Opposition reached a consensus on holding a discussion on the Constitution in both Houses. The Lok Sabha will hold the discussion on December 13 and 14 and the Rajya Sabha on December 16 and 17. The ruling side agreed to allow certain issues such as the Bangladesh situation and the violence in Sambhal to be raised during Zero Hour, but did not accede to any discussion on the Adani indictment. The main Opposition party, the Congress, decided not to disrupt Parliament over the Adani issue,



Major breakthrough: Floor leaders of various parties at a meeting at the chamber of the Speaker in Parliament on Monday. ANI

but it will hold a protest outside the Makar Dwar of the Parliament complex at 10.30 a.m. on Tuesday. Before the protest, at a meeting of INDIA bloc leaders, the Congress would ask other parties also to join the demonstration, sources said. The breakthrough came

at a meeting of floor leaders of all parties called by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, where the government conceded to the demand for holding a discussion on the Constitution. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and Leader of the Opposition Rahul Gandhi had made the demand in

separate letters to Rajya Sabha Chairperson Jagdeep Dhankhar and Mr. Birla, respectively, last week. “The Lok Sabha Speaker met with floor leaders of all the parties. Everybody expressed their frustration on Parliament not functioning. Everybody was of the view that it was not appropriate to waste people’s money. The Opposition also put forward their demand, there was a proposal in Business Advisory Committee to have discussion on the Constitution, the government has agreed to it,” Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju told presspersons. CONTINUED ON » PAGE 10 BOTH HOUSES STALLED » PAGE 11

BJP meet likely to choose Maharashtra CM tomorrow

Snehal Mutha
Vinaya Deshpande Pandit
MUMBAI

With the swearing-in ceremony of the Mahayuti government in Maharashtra two days away, Caretaker Chief Minister and Shiv Sena chief Eknath Shinde is recovering from illness and his party is yet to decide on the Deputy Chief Minister. The BJP appointed Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and former Gujarat CM Vijay Rupani as central observers for a meeting of its MLAs-elect who will appoint the legislature party leader and the Chief Whip of the party at a meeting on Wednesday at the Central Hall of the Vidhan Bhavan here. On Monday evening, Nationalist Congress Party leader Ajit Pawar reached New Delhi. Mr. Shinde’s son, Shrikant Shinde, MP, took to X to

deny reports about his name being considered for the Deputy CM’s position. “The swearing-in ceremony of the Mahayuti government has been delayed, which has led to a surge in the discussions and rumours. Hon caretaker CM Shri Eknath Shinde had to take rest at his native place for two days due to health issues... There have been speculations about me becoming the DCM. But these news reports are baseless and unfounded,” he posted. Top sources in the Shiv Sena told The Hindu that the decision on the Deputy CM had not been made yet and it is not yet clear if Mr. Eknath Shinde will take the post or appoint someone else. “We have asked for the Home portfolio,” said a senior leader. CONTINUED ON » PAGE 10



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SPOTLIGHT



A major hurdle: The School Education Department has started the Aadhaar through Schools initiative to ensure that every child in the school system gets the Aadhaar card and opens a bank account linked to the former. However, most children of migrant workers could not do so owing to various reasons. C. VENKATACHALAPATHY

The heavy burden of proof

While Tamil Nadu is among the better performers in gross school enrolment, there seems to be a fly in the ointment. The requirement of an Aadhaar card to complete admission formalities has made things difficult for children of migrant workers. **Meghna M.** dives deep to find out how disruptive this mandatory step is for some students

Teachers have been asking R. Mikkel, a Class V student of a government school in Chennai, to get an Aadhaar card for the past four years. It would help him complete his admission formalities and open a bank account to receive scholarships that the Tamil Nadu government offers. However, Mikkel does not have a birth certificate, which is mandatory for getting an Aadhaar card. Mikkel's parents are daily wage labourers from Bihar who do odd jobs in Chennai. "We have asked the parents to get the birth certificate from Bihar so that we can get an Aadhaar ready for him. It would help to complete his admission process. This would show him to be a student of the school, allowing him to further his education," says Mikkel's teacher.

But his parents are reluctant to go home and finish the formalities. "It will mean losing my salary. The salary helps us sustain our lives. How can we skip work to get a document? Who will pay us?" says Ram S., Mikkel's father. Mikkel's story is not an isolated one. With no Aadhaar card or other identity documents, teachers are having hard time enrolling children of migrant workers in government schools.

In 2019, the School Education Department mandated that every student's Aadhaar number be linked to the Educational Management Information System (EMIS). Although admitting a student under the Right to Education (RTE) Act of 2009 does not require certificates, the EMIS requires schools to upload documents such as Aadhaar, community certificate, nativity certificate, and birth certificate, besides maintaining attendance and the prizes won in the *Kalaithiruvizha* competitions. A completed profile means that a student is successfully enrolled.

"But most students do not have Aadhaar cards and some don't have birth certificates either. This means we can't complete the admission formalities. We get four or more calls a day from the department asking us to enter the Aadhaar details," says a teacher of a government school in Mogappair, Chennai.

The case of the twins

A 12-year-old girl turns to Vaishnavi S., pointing to a Tamil word in her notebook and asking her to help pronounce it. "That's *Ooru* [place]," replies Vaishnavi, a Class IV student of a government school in Chennai. Vaishnavi and Bhavani, both aged 12, are twins. Their father has been trying to get Aadhaar cards for both of them for three years now, but the problem is that the twins do not have birth certificates. Though their father's family members have been living in Chennai for years, their mother moved to the city from Uttar Pradesh after marriage. So, she went back to her parents' home in Uttar Pradesh for delivery.

"We didn't get a birth certificate. So, when the school told us that an Aadhaar card was required for the children to complete admission, we knew we had to visit our village. This we can't do because my husband cannot leave his daily wage job as painter," says their mother Rindha Devi.

So the school gave them a bonafide certificate stating that the students were residents of Tamil Nadu and studying in the school. Their father was expected to take leave later and get the Aadhaar cards for them.

"Earlier this year, the application went through. But only Vaishnavi got her Aadhaar card. Bhavani didn't. The officials suspected that we were creating a duplicate Aadhaar because most of the details were the same and they had identical faces. So Bhavani does not have a card. They are no longer accepting a bonafide certi-



Casual labourers entering the State find it tough to get the Aadhaar cards for their children. They do not have proof of address because they stay in small houses provided in the factory

S. RAKESH,
a labour from Bihar working in Salem

ates either. We are tired of running from pillar to post," Ms. Rindha Devi says.

In June this year, the department started the Aadhaar through Schools initiative to ensure that every child in the school system gets the Aadhaar card and opens a bank account linked to the former. However, most children of migrant workers could not do so owing to various reasons – missing documents, no digital copy of birth certificates, different addresses, and wrong pincodes.

Linkage crucial

A bank account is crucial for students to receive welfare benefits – be it the ₹500 given to students of Most Backward Classes and Denotified Communities from Class III or the ₹1,000 given a month to a higher secondary student under the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister's Talent Search Exam. However, it is mandatory to link the bank account with the Aadhaar. "My child, Umang, was born at Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh. Through the initiative, we decided to get the Aadhaar card for Umang. The official denied us an Aadhaar card because my child's name was written in Hindi in the birth certificate. All other details on the birth certificate were in English except his name. He asked me to get the card from my village," says Sonam Pandey, mother of the Class III student.

Deepak Guhain from Assam has been working in Chennai for the past two years. He has been trying to get an Aadhaar card for his son, but officials insisted on a digital copy of the birth certificate. "I cannot afford to miss work to go back to Assam to get it. I don't know what to do," he says.

Teachers in trouble

"We tried counselling the parents and consistent follow-up to ensure that every student completed the formalities; but, as they are daily wage labourers, it is difficult. If they were born here, we would help," says a teacher of the government school at Mogappair.

Teachers say they would give a bonafide certificate so that a child could pursue further education. "But this certificate cannot be used any

In 2019, the School Education Department mandated that every student's Aadhaar number be linked to the Educational Management Information System (EMIS). The EMIS requires schools to request documents such as Aadhaar, community certificate, nativity certificate, and birth certificate

more. The formalities [such as uploading of Aadhaar] should be completed as proof of student strength of a school. We have over 20 children of migrant workers in our school, but we cannot provide proof of enrolment on the EMIS. This would prompt the department to assume that we have poor student strength and our teachers can be moved out," says a teacher of a government school at Shenoy Nagar, Chennai.

When the child enters Class X, the teacher has to follow up continuously to ensure that they can sit for the exam. In 2018, the Supreme Court directed that the Aadhaar could not be made mandatory for writing exams or enrolment. However, teachers say this has not been the case in Tamil Nadu. While no student has been denied the welfare benefits, education, or their right to sit for exams, the road leading to all of them has been anything but smooth.

"In a primary school, the teacher might have just marked zero in the Aadhaar card field to make a valid entry into the EMIS. A student automatically makes it to Class X. Then the real task begins. Last year, a teacher travelled with some students to their birthplace to get the birth certificates and then made sure that they got their Aadhaar cards. Only then were the students able to write the exam," says a teacher of a government school at Puzhal, Chennai.

S. Rakesh, a migrant labour from Bihar, has settled at Periyar Pudur in Salem. He says, "With the help of house owners, we were able to get the LPG cylinder bill. Using it, we are changing our

address in Aadhaar and it is also used for our children to get Aadhaar cards," he says.

Casual labourers entering the State find it tough to get the Aadhaar cards for their children to get admission in a primary school. "They do not have proof of address because they stay in small houses provided in the factory. As they are new to work, the owners do not help them either," adds Mr. Rakesh.

A task for schools

"The schools can compile the list of students who don't have the documents and take it up with the Collector and the Revenue Department to ensure that they get their Aadhaar cards. We are ensuring that school students have their Aadhaar cards linked to the EMIS because it would help them get scholarships in Class VI and IX. We have covered 30 lakh children so far and hope to complete the process by January," says a senior official of the School Education Department.

Subulakshmi, a field worker of Social Awareness and Voluntary Education (SAVE), a non-governmental organisation in Tiruppur, visits 75 children of migrant workers at Koilvazhi in Tiruppur district almost every day. Their parents are employed with the Tiruppur Corporation. They are all from the areas along the Karnataka-Maharashtra border. "The elders go to work early in the morning and return home by 2 p.m. or 3 p.m. They cannot take a day off or skip work to get an Aadhaar card for the children," says Ms. Subulakshmi.

SAVE founder A. Aloysius says parents lack awareness of the need for Aadhaar to register the children at school. "They will have the card, but will not share the details; they may have left the cards at home; they will not even remember whether they have secured the Aadhaar card for a child; they will not have proper identity papers to get it here. There is a sense of fear and uncertainty among them always," he says. "So, these children remain excluded from the education system."

A universal problem

Getting an Aadhaar card is difficult not only for children of migrant workers but also for some local residents and nomadic tribes. A government higher secondary school teacher at Nagapattinam says, "We receive children from the Adhiyan community, known as *Boom Boom Mattukkarar*. As they do not have community certificates, they could not access education and jobs. As their families move from one district to another to sell toys and bangles, they take their children along. When they attempt to admit their children to a government school, it becomes impossible because they lack the Aadhaar, birth, caste, and nativity certificates."

If students do not have a bank account, the EMIS requires the school to open a post office account for them. Without the Aadhaar or other documents of identity, opening a post office account is impossible. A minimum deposit of ₹200 is required too. "If it is for one child, it's manageable. But how many children can I support," asks the headmaster of a school in a Cauvery delta district.

A teacher from Karur helped a student from the Kallodar community to enrol. This community is largely engaged in rock-cutting. Since the student's parents did not have a mobile phone, she gave her own number for Aadhaar verification.

(With inputs from M. Soundariya Preetha in Coimbatore, M. Sabari in Salem, and Nacchinarkkiniyan M. in Tiruchi.)



Herculean task: If students do not have a bank account to receive welfare assistance, schools are required to open a post office account for them. Without the Aadhaar or other documents of identity, opening a post office account is impossible. C. VENKATACHALAPATHY

