

Govt cites decorum to dodge query on judge

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Jawhar Sircar, and (right) Justice Victoria Gowri

File picture

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The government on Thursday dodged a question in the Rajya Sabha on whether it was appropriate for a person accused of making “casteist remarks and remarks against minorities” to be appointed as a high court judge.

Faced with this question from Trinamul Congress MP Jawhar Sircar on the appointment of Justice Victoria Gowri to Madras High Court earlier this week, leader of the House Piyush Goyal stepped in even though Union law minister Kiren Rijiju — who has been leading the charge against the collegium system — was in the House.

“I think we should have some decorum. An honourable judge who has been duly appointed through a process, I don't think we as members should be casting aspersions of this nature,” Goyal said.

When Sircar pointed out that what he had said was in the public domain and the appointment had also been challenged on the same grounds, Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar said: “When it comes to the judiciary with respect to which a judgment of the highest court has already come, I am sure that issue should be kept away. You are making a reference to an individual who is not a member of this House. The President has issued a warrant, the Supreme Court has taken a view.”

Rijju then took over but sidestepped Sircar's supplementary question on Justice Gowri as also the main query seeking details "regarding sharp points of difference between the Supreme Court and the government on important issues like the power and procedure of appointing judges to the high courts and the Supreme Court".

As for reports that he had written to the Chief Justice of India seeking government nominees in court collegiums for appointment of judges to the Supreme Court and the high courts, Rijju did not deny sending a communication with proposals on how to improve the system of appointment of judges. But he said in response to the question from the BJP's Sushil Modi that its contents were misrepresented in the media.