

Opposition MPs walk out from meeting of Parliamentary panel on IT

Our Special Correspondent

Opposition MPs walked out of a meeting of the parliamentary standing committee on communications and information technology on Wednesday in protest against the move to adopt a report endorsing the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2023, without proper perusal.

The report was subsequently adopted by the remaining members of the committee. While the Opposition had no issue with the second item on the agenda — a draft report on the review of the functioning of the Central Board of Film Certification — their reason for opposing the report on citizens' data security and privacy was the inclusion of the new bill without being scrutinised.

“Not only have we not studied the bill, the draft report uses flattering language for a draft piece of legislation which we have not scrutinised,” a committee member told **The Telegraph**. The draft report was circulated to the members on the eve of the meeting, leaving them with little time to study the bill.

“Our report was essentially on an earlier draft of the bill which the IT secretary had agreed to make several changes in. We do not know if that has been carried out in the new bill,” the member said.

When Opposition MPs pointed this out, the BJP MPs insisted that it is for the committee to adopt the report by majority vote. Outnumbered, the Opposition MPs walked out but one of them — CPM's John Brittas — insisted on submitting a dissent note.

Trinamul's Jawhar Sircar apparently objected to the government packing the Data Protection Board with its own people instead of judicial and independent persons.

Other Opposition MPs who walked out included Karti Chidambaram of the Congress, Mahua Moitra of Trinamul, T. Sumathy of the DMK and Jaideep Galla of the TDP.