



## Guide for Visitors to the Galleries

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Lok Sabha Secretariat  
New Delhi

## Guide for Visitors to the Galleries

One of the most magnificent buildings in New Delhi, the Parliament House is a massive circular edifice measuring about 170.69 mtrs. (560 feet) in diameter and 536.33 mtrs. (one-third of a mile or 0.54 kilometre) in circumference. Apart from the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha Chambers, the Central Hall of Parliament House occupies a very important position in the Parliament House. Short passages radiating from three equidistant points on the circumference of the Central Hall connect it with the Lok Sabha Chamber, the Rajya Sabha Chamber and the Reading Hall.

### **Lok Sabha Chamber**

The Lok Sabha Chamber has a horse-shoe shape. The Chair of the Speaker is placed conspicuously at the centre of the diameter connecting the two ends of the semi-circle. To the right of the Chair is located the Official Gallery meant for the use of the officials required to be present in attendance on Ministers in connection with the business of the House. To the left of the Chair is the Special Box reserved for Members of the family and guests of the President, Governors of States, visiting Heads of State and Government, visiting Parliamentary Delegations and other high dignitaries in the discretion of the Speaker.

In the pit of the Chamber just down below the Speaker's Chair is the Table for the Secretary-General of the House. In front of Secretary-General is placed a large Table for other Officers of the House and the Official Reporters.

The Chamber has a seating accommodation for 550 Members. The seats are divided into six blocks each with eleven rows. All parties and groups are allotted seats in proportion to their strength in the House – Government Party to the right of the Chair and Opposition Parties/Groups to the left of the Chair.

According to the Constitution, the Lok Sabha shall consist of—

- (a) not more than five hundred and thirty Members chosen by direct election from territorial constituencies in the States;



- A. Speaker's Chair.
- B. Secretary-General's Chair.
- C. Table for other Officers of the House and Official Reporters.
- D. Members of the Government Party.
- E. Members of the Opposition Parties/ Groups.
- F. Boards to show results of division.
- G. Official Gallery.
- H. Special Box.
- I. Press Gallery.
- J. Diplomatic Gallery.
- K. Distinguished Visitors' Gallery.
- L. Speaker's Gallery.
- M. Rajya Sabha Gallery.
- N. Special Gallery.
- O. Public Galleries.
- p. Screens showing vote cast by Members.

(b) not more than twenty members to represent the Union territories chosen in such manner as Parliament may by law provide; and

(c) not more than two Members of the Anglo-Indian Community nominated by the President, if the President is of the opinion that, that community is not adequately represented in Lok Sabha.

The Representation of the People Act, 1950, as amended, and Article 331 of the Constitution provide the following composition of Lok Sabha:

(i) From States	530	}	All elected
(ii) From Union territories	13		
(iii) Anglo-Indians	2		
	545		If nominated by the President under Article 331 of the Constitution.

On the first floor of the Lok Sabha Chamber are located the various Public Galleries and the Press Gallery. The Press Gallery is just above the Chair and to its left are situated the Speaker's Gallery (meant for the guests of the Speaker), the Rajya Sabha Gallery (meant for the Members of Rajya Sabha) and the Special Gallery (meant

for the sons, daughters, father and mother of Members). The Public Gallery is in the semi-circular part of the Chamber. Next to it are situated the Diplomatic and Distinguished Visitors' Galleries.

Adjoining the Chamber and co-terminus with it are two covered corridors called the Inner and Outer Lobbies. These Lobbies are suitably furnished to make them a comfortable place for Members to sit and have informal discussions among themselves.

### **Simultaneous Interpretation System**

The Lok Sabha Chamber is equipped with Simultaneous Interpretation System which enables Members to listen to English version of a Hindi speech, Hindi version of an English speech and English as well as Hindi versions of speeches made in Assamese, Bengali, Kannada, Maithili, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Odia, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu. For this purpose, each seat is provided with an earphone and a language selector switch by using which a Member can follow the proceedings in the language of choice. The simultaneous interpretation of proceedings is provided by Parliamentary Interpreters whose booths (one each for English, Hindi and Regional Language Interpreters) are located in the two corners of the Chamber near the Official Gallery and the Special Box.

### **Procedure in the House**

The Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha and Directions issued by the Speaker from time to time thereunder regulate the procedure in Lok Sabha.

The items of business, notice of which is received from the Ministers/Private Members and admitted by the Speaker, are included in the daily List of Business which is printed and circulated to Members in advance and uploaded on the Lok Sabha website.

For various items of Government Legislative, Financial and other business to be taken up in the House the time is allotted by the House on

the recommendations of the Business Advisory Committee.

### **Time of Sittings**

When in session, Lok Sabha holds its sittings usually from 11 A.M. to 1 P.M. and from 2 P.M. to 6 P.M. On some days the sittings are continuously held without observing lunch break and are also extended beyond 6 P.M. depending upon the business before the House. Lok Sabha does not ordinarily sit on Saturdays and Sundays and other closed holidays.

### **Commencement of a Sitting**

At the time fixed for the commencement of a sitting, the Marshal of the House after ascertaining that 55 Members are present in the House which number, including the Speaker, is required to form the quorum, announces in Hindi,

“माननीय सभासदों, माननीय अध्यक्ष जी”

(Hon'ble Members, Hon'ble Speaker)

The Speaker then reaches to the seat from the Chamber and the Members rise in their seats. After bowing or doing *namaskar* with folded hands to all sides of the House which is reciprocated by Members bowing or folding hands towards the Chair, the Speaker takes the seat. Thereafter, the Members take their seats and the business of the House starts.

Before the business entered in the order paper is taken up, a new Member who has not yet made and subscribed an oath or affirmation does so. In the case of death of a sitting or an ex-member or a leading personality, obituary references are made and this item is also taken up before Questions.

### **Question Hour**

The first hour of every sitting of Lok Sabha is called the Question Hour. Asking of questions in Parliament is an unfettered right of Members. It is during the Question Hour that they may ask questions on different aspects of administration and Government policy in the national as well

as international spheres. Every Minister whose turn it is to answer to questions has to rise in the seat and give answers.

Questions are of four types – Starred, Unstarred, Short Notice Questions and Questions to Private Members. A Starred Question is one to which a Member desires an oral answer in the House and which is distinguished by an asterisk mark. An Unstarred Question is one which is not called for oral answer in the House and on which no supplementary questions can consequently be asked. An answer to such a question is given in writing. The Notice period for taking Starred/Unstarred Question is 15 clear days.

If the questions given notice of are admitted by the Speaker, they are listed and printed for answer on the dates allotted to the Ministries to which the subject-matter of the question pertains.

The normal period of notice does not apply to Short Notice Questions which relate to matters of urgent public importance. However, a Short Notice Question may only be answered on short notice if so permitted by the Speaker and the Minister concerned is prepared to answer it at shorter notice. A Short Notice Question is taken up for answer immediately after the Question Hour. A Question may also be addressed to a Private Member provided the subject-matter of the Question relates to some Bill, Resolution or other matter connected with the business of the Lok Sabha for which the Member is responsible.

### **Business after Question Hour**

After the Question Hour, the House takes up other items of work before proceeding to the main business of the day. These may consist of one or more of the following:

Adjournment Motions, Questions involving a breach of privilege, Papers to be laid on the Table, Communication of messages from the President, Communication of messages from the Rajya Sabha, Intimation regarding President's assent to Bills, Presentation of Reports of Committees, Presentation of Petitions, Statements by Ministers, Motions for elections to Committees, Calling Attention, Bills to be withdrawn and introduced, Matters under Rule 377.

### **Main Business**

The main business of the day may be consideration of a Bill or financial business or consideration of a resolution or a motion.

### **Legislative Business**

Legislative proposals in the form of a Bill can be brought forward either by a Minister or by a Private Member. In the former case it is known as Government Bill and in the latter case it is called a Private Member's Bill. Every Bill passes through three stages—called the three readings—before it is passed. To become law it must be passed by both the Houses of Parliament and then assented to by the President.

### **Financial Business**

The presentation of the annual Budgets—General and Railways—their discussion and voting on the various Demands for Grants followed by passing of Appropriation Bill and Finance Bill, which is a long drawn process, take up a major part of the time of the House during the Budget Session every year.

### **Motions and Resolutions**

Among the other kinds of business which come up before the House are resolutions and motions which may be brought forward by Government or by Private Members. Government may move a resolution or a motion for obtaining the sanction to a scheme or opinion of the House on an important matter of policy or on a grave situation. Similarly, a Private Member may move a resolution or motion in order to draw the attention of the House and of the Government to a particular problem.

The last two and a half hours of a sitting on every Friday are generally allotted for transaction of Private Members' business *i.e.* Private Members' Bills and Private Members' Resolutions. Business relating to Bills and resolutions is transacted on alternative Fridays starting with Bills on the first Friday of the session and resolution on the next Friday and so on.

### **Half-an-Hour Discussions**

A Half-an-Hour Discussion can be raised on a matter of sufficient public importance which has been the subject of a recent question in Lok Sabha, irrespective of the fact whether the

question was answered orally or the answer was laid on the Table of the House and the answer to which needs further elucidation on a matter of fact. Normally not more than half an hour is allowed for such a discussion.

Usually, Half-an-Hour Discussion is listed on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays only. In one session, a Member is allowed to raise not more than two Half-an-Hour Discussions.

No Half-an-Hour Discussion is fixed on the first day of the session. During the Budget Session, no Half-an-Hour Discussion will be held till the transaction of financial business is completed.

During the discussion, the Member who has given notice makes a short statement and not more than four Members who have intimated earlier and have secured one of the four places in the ballot are permitted to ask a question each for further elucidating any matter of fact. Thereafter, the Minister concerned replies. There is no formal motion before the House nor voting.

### **Discussion on Matters of Urgent Public Importance under Rule 193**

Members may raise discussions on matters of urgent public importance with the permission of the Speaker. Such discussions may take place on two days in a week.

No formal motion is moved in the House nor is there any voting on such a discussion.

### **Debate in the House**

After the Member who initiates discussion on an item of business has spoken, other Members can speak on that item of business in such order as the Speaker may call upon them. Only one Member can speak at a time and all speeches are directed to the Chair. A matter requiring the decision of the House is decided by means of a question put by the Speaker on a motion made by a Member.

### **Division**

A Division is one of the forms in which the decision of the House is ascertained. Normally, when a motion is put to the House Members for and against it indicate their opinion by saying "Aye" or "No" from their seats. The Chair goes by the voices and declares that the motion is either accepted or negatived by the House. If a



Member challenges the decision, the Chair orders that the lobbies be cleared. Then the Division Bell is rung and an entire network of bells installed in the various parts and rooms in Parliament House, Parliament Library Building and Parliament House Annexe rings continuously for three and a half minutes. Members and Ministers rush to the Chamber from all sides. After the bell stops, all the doors to the Chamber are closed and nobody can enter or leave the Chamber till the division is over. Then the Chair puts the question for the second time and declares whether in its opinion the "Ayes" or the "Noes", have it. If the opinion so declared is again challenged, the Chair asks the votes to be recorded by operating the Automatic Vote Recording Equipment.

#### **Automatic Vote Recording System**

With the announcement of the Speaker for recording the votes, the Secretary-General activates the vote recording system. Then a gong sounds serving as a signal to Members for casting their votes. For casting a vote each Member present in the Chamber has to press a switch and then operate one of the three push buttons fixed in the seat. The push switch must be kept pressed simultaneously until the gong sounds for the second time after 10 seconds.

There are two screens installed in the wall on either side of the Speaker's Chair in the Chamber. Each vote cast by a Member is flashed there. Immediately after the votes are cast, they are totalled mechanically and the details of the results are flashed on the Result Indicator screens installed in the railings of the Speaker's and Diplomatic Galleries.

Divisions are normally held with the aid of the Automatic Vote Recording Equipment. Where so directed by the Speaker in terms of relevant provision in the Rules of Procedure, etc. in Lok Sabha, divisions may also be held either by distribution of 'Aye'/'No' and 'Abstention' slips to members in the House or by the members recording their votes by going into the Lobbies.

#### **Result of Voting**

Immediately after the sounding of the second audio alarm, the system starts totalling up the affirmative and negative votes, besides abstentions and the total numbers of "AYES", "NOES" and "ABSTAIN" are flashed on the Total

Result Display screens. It also indicates the total number of Members who have exercised their vote.

As soon as the result is flashed, a print-out of the voting result is taken for permanent record.

### **Publication of Debates**

Three versions of Lok Sabha Debates are prepared, viz., Original version, Hindi version and English version. All the three versions are printed.

Original version of the Debates contains original English proceedings in English and original Hindi proceedings in Hindi and English/Hindi translation of regional speeches. This is an authoritative record of the proceedings of the House.

English version of the Debates contains original proceedings in English along with English translation of the proceedings recorded in Hindi, as also English translation of speeches in regional languages, if any.

Hindi version of the Debates contains original proceedings in Hindi along with Hindi translation of proceedings recorded in English and Hindi translation of speeches in regional languages, if any.

Lok Sabha debates are priced publications and printed copies of the debates are available for sale at the Sales Counter, Reception, Parliament House. Original version of Lok Sabha proceedings is also available at the Websites <http://www.parliamentofindia.nic.in> and <http://loksabha.nic.in>.

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LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT  
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*\*Cover Photo: A panoramic view of Parliament House*