



Parliamentary Committees



Lok Sabha Secretariat
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Parliamentary Committees

The work done by the Parliament in modern times is not only varied in nature, but considerable in volume. The time at its disposal is limited. It cannot, therefore, give close consideration to all the legislative and other matters that come up before it. A good deal of its business is, therefore, transacted by what are called the Parliamentary Committees.

Ad hoc and Standing Committees

Parliamentary Committees are of two kinds: *Ad hoc* Committees and the Standing Committees. *Ad hoc* Committees are appointed for a specific purpose and they cease to exist when they finish the task assigned to them and submit a report. The principal *Ad hoc* Committees are the Select and Joint Committees on Bills. Others like the Railway Convention Committee, the Committees on the Draft Five Year Plans and the Hindi Equivalents Committee were appointed for specific purposes.

Apart from the *Ad hoc* Committees, each House of Parliament has Standing Committees like the Business Advisory Committee, the Committee on Petitions, the Committee of Privileges and the Rules Committee.

Other Committees

Of special importance is yet another class of Committees which act as Parliament's 'Watch Dogs' over the Executive. These are the Committees on Subordinate Legislation, the Committee on Government Assurances, the Committee on Estimates, the Committee on Public Accounts and the Committee on Public Undertakings and the Departmentally Related Standing Committees (DRSCs). The Committee on Estimates, the Committee on Public Accounts, the Committee on Public Undertakings and DRSCs play an important role in exercising a check over governmental expenditure and policy formulation.

Composition and Functions of the Committees

Select and Joint Committees

When a Bill comes up before a House for general discussion, it is open to that House to refer it to a Select Committee of the House or a Joint Committee of the two Houses. A motion has to be moved and adopted to this effect in the

House in which the Bill comes up for consideration. In case the motion adopted is for reference of the Bill to a Joint Committee, the decision is conveyed to the other House requesting them to nominate Members of the other House to serve on the Committee.

The Select or Joint Committee considers the Bill clause by clause just as the two Houses do. Amendments can be moved to various clauses by Members of the Committee. The Committee can also take evidence of associations, public bodies or experts who are interested in the Bill. After the Bill has thus been considered, the Committee submits its report to the House. Members who do not agree with the majority report may append their minutes of dissent to the report.

Committee on Estimates

This Committee consists of thirty Members who are elected by the Lok Sabha every year from amongst its Members. A Minister is not eligible for election to this Committee. The term of the Committee is one year.

The main function of the Committee on Estimates is to report what economies, improvements in organisation, efficiency, or administrative reform, consistent with the policy underlying the estimates, may be effected and to suggest alternative policies in order to bring about efficiency and economy in administration. From time to time, the Committee selects such of the estimates pertaining to a Ministry or a group of Ministries or statutory and other Government bodies as may seem fit to the Committee. The Committee also examines matters of special interest which may arise or come to light in the course of its work or which are specifically referred to it by the House or the Speaker.

Committee on Public Undertakings

The Committee on Public Undertakings consists of 15 Members elected by the Lok Sabha; 7 Members of Rajya Sabha are also associated with it. A Minister is not eligible for election to this Committee. The term of the Committee is one year.

The functions of the Committee on Public Undertakings are:—(a) to examine the reports

and accounts of Public Undertakings; (b) to examine the reports, if any, of the Comptroller and Auditor General on the Public Undertakings; (c) to examine in the context of the autonomy and efficiency of the Public Undertakings—whether the affairs of the Public Undertakings are being managed in accordance with sound business principles and prudent commercial practices; and (d) such other functions vested in the Committee on Public Accounts and the Committee on Estimates in relation to the Public Undertakings as are not covered by clauses (a), (b) and (c) above and as may be allotted to the Committee by the Speaker from time to time. The Committee does not, however, examine matters of major Government policy and matters of day-to-day administration of the Undertakings.

Committee on Public Accounts

This Committee consists of 15 Members elected by the Lok Sabha; 7 Members of the Rajya Sabha are also associated with it. A Minister is not eligible for election to this Committee. The term of the Committee is one year.

The main duty of the Committee is to ascertain whether the money granted by Parliament has been spent by Government “within the scope of the Demand”. The Appropriation Accounts of the Government of India and the Audit Reports presented by the Comptroller and Auditor General mainly form the basis for the examination of the Committee. Cases involving losses, nugatory expenditure and financial irregularities come in for severe criticism by the Committee. The Committee is not concerned with questions of policy. It is concerned only with the execution of the policy laid down by Parliament and its results.

Business Advisory Committee (Lok Sabha)

The Business Advisory Committee of Lok Sabha consists of 15 Members, including the Speaker who is the *ex-officio* Chairperson. The Members are nominated by the Speaker. Almost all sections of the House are represented on the Committee as per the respective strength of parties in the House. The function of the Committee is to recommend the time that should be allotted for the discussion of such Government, legislative and other business as the Speaker, in consultation with the Leader of

the House, may direct to be referred to the Committee. The Committee, on its own initiative, may also recommend to the Government to bring forward particular subjects for discussion in the House and recommend allocation of time for such discussions. The decisions reached by the Committee are always unanimous in character and represent the collective view of the House. The Committee generally meets at the beginning of each Session and thereafter as and when necessary.

Committee on Private Members' Bills and Resolutions (Lok Sabha)

This Committee consists of 15 Members and the Deputy Speaker is its Chairperson when nominated as a Member of the Committee. The Committee is nominated by the Speaker. The functions of the Committee are to allot time to Private Members' Bills and Resolutions, to examine Private Members' Bills seeking to amend the Constitution before their introduction in Lok Sabha, to examine all Private Members' Bills after they are introduced and before they are taken up for consideration in the House and to classify them according to their nature, urgency and importance into two categories namely, category A and category B, and also to examine such Private Members' Bills where the legislative competence of the House is challenged.

The Committee, thus, performs the same function in relation to Private Members' Bills and Resolutions as the Business Advisory Committee does in regard to Government Business. The Committee holds office for a term not exceeding one year.

Rules Committee (Lok Sabha)

The Rules Committee consists of 15 Members, including the Speaker who is the *ex-officio* Chairperson of the Committee. The Members are nominated by the Speaker. The Committee considers matters of procedure and conduct of business in the House and recommends any amendments or additions to the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha that are considered necessary.

General Purposes Committee (Lok Sabha)

The Speaker is the *ex-officio* Chairperson of the Committee which consists of Deputy Speaker,

Members of the Panel of the Chairpersons, Chairpersons of all Standing Committees of Lok Sabha, Leaders of Recognised Parties/Groups in Lok Sabha and such other Members as may be nominated by the Speaker. The Committee considers and advises on such matters concerning the affairs of the House as may be referred to it by the Speaker from time to time and as do not appropriately fall within the purview of any other Parliamentary Committee.

Committee of Privileges (Lok Sabha)

This Committee consists of 15 Members nominated by the Speaker. The function is to examine every question involving breach of privilege of the House or of the Members of any Committee thereof referred to it by the House or by the Speaker. It determines with reference to the facts of each case whether a breach of privilege is involved and makes suitable recommendations in its report.

Committee on Papers Laid on the Table (Lok Sabha)

This Committee consists of 15 Members nominated by the Speaker. Its function is to examine all papers laid on the Table of the House by Ministers (other than those which fall within the purview of the Committee on Subordinate Legislation or any other Parliamentary Committee) and to report to the House—(a) whether there has been compliance of the provisions of the Constitution, Act, rule or regulation under which the paper has been laid; (b) whether there has been any unreasonable delay in laying the paper; (c) if there has been such delay, whether a statement explaining the reasons for delay has been laid on the Table of the House and whether those reasons are satisfactory; (d) whether both the Hindi and English versions of the paper have been laid on the Table; (e) whether a statement explaining the reasons for not laying the Hindi version has been given and whether such reasons are satisfactory; and (f) such other functions in respect of the papers laid on the Table as may be assigned to it by the Speaker from time to time.

Committee on Petitions (Lok Sabha)

The Committee consists of 15 Members nominated by the Speaker. A Minister is not nominated to this Committee. The function of

the Committee is to consider and report on petitions presented to the House. Besides, it considers representations from individuals, associations, etc. on subjects which are not covered by the rules relating to petitions and gives directions for their disposal.

Committee on Subordinate Legislation (Lok Sabha)

The Committee consists of 15 Members nominated by the Speaker. A Minister is not nominated to this Committee. The term of the Committee is one year.

The Committee scrutinizes and reports to the House whether the powers to make regulations, rules, sub-rules, by-laws, etc. conferred by the Constitution or delegated by Parliament are being properly exercised by the Executive within the scope of such delegation.

Committee on Government Assurances (Lok Sabha)

This Committee consists of 15 Members nominated by the Speaker. A Minister is not nominated to this Committee. While replying to Questions in the House or during discussions on Bills, Resolutions, Motions, etc., Ministers at times give assurances or undertakings either to consider a matter or to take action or to furnish the House further information later. The functions of this Committee are to scrutinize the assurances, promises, undertakings, etc. given by Ministers from time to time and to report to Lok Sabha on the extent to which such assurances, etc. have been implemented and to see whether such implementation has taken place within the minimum time necessary for the purpose.

Committee on Absence of Members from the Sittings of the House (Lok Sabha)

The Committee consists of 15 Members who hold office for one year. The Members are nominated by the Speaker. This Committee considers all applications from Members for leave of absence from the sittings of the House and examines every case where a Member has been absent for a period of 60 days or more, without permission, from the sittings of the House. In its report, it makes recommendations with

respect to each case as to whether the absence should be condoned or leave applied granted or whether the circumstances of the case justify that the House should declare the seat of the Member vacant.

Joint Committee on Offices of Profit

This Committee consists of 15 Members. Ten Members are elected from Lok Sabha and five from Rajya Sabha. The Committee is constituted for the duration of each Lok Sabha.

The main functions of the Committee are to examine the composition and character of the Committees appointed by the Central and State Governments and to recommend what offices should disqualify and what offices should not disqualify a person for being chosen as, and for being, a Member of either House of Parliament under article 102 of the Constitution. The Committee also scrutinizes from time to time, the Schedule to the Parliament (Prevention of Disqualification) Act, 1959, and recommends any amendments in the said Schedule, whether by way of addition, omission or otherwise.

Committee on the Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes

The Committee on the Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes consists of 20 Members elected by the Lok Sabha; 10 Members of Rajya Sabha are also associated with it. The term of the Committee is one year. A Minister is not eligible for election to the Committee. The main functions of the Committee are to consider all matters concerning the welfare of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, falling within the purview of the Union Government and the Union Territories, to consider reports submitted by the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and National Commission for Scheduled Tribes and to examine the measures taken by the Union Government to secure due representation of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in services and posts in its control.

Committee on the Welfare of Other Backward Classes

The Committee on the Welfare of Other Backward Classes consists of 20 Members elected

by the Lok Sabha; 10 Members of Rajya Sabha are also associated with it. The term of the Committee is one year. A Minister is not eligible for election to the Committee. The main functions of the Committee: (i) to consider the reports submitted by the National Commission for Backward Classes set up under the National Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993 and to report to both the Houses as to the measures that should be taken by the Union Government in respect of matters within the purview of the Union Government, including the Administrations of the Union territories; (ii) to report to both the Houses on the action taken by the Union Government and the Administrations of the Union territories on the measures proposed by the Committee; (iii) to examine the measures taken by the Union Government to secure the representation of the Other Backward Classes, particularly the Most Backward Classes, in services and posts under its control (including appointments in the public sector undertakings, statutory and semi-Government Bodies and in the Union territories) having regard to the provisions of the Constitution; (iv) to report to both the Houses on the working of the welfare programmes for the Other Backward Classes in the Union territories; (v) to consider generally and to report to both the Houses on all matters concerning the welfare of the Other Backward Classes which fall within the purview of Union Government, including the Administrations of Union territories; and (vi) to examine such of matters as may deem fit to the Committee or are specifically referred to it by the House or the Speaker.

Railway Convention Committee

The Railway Convention Committee is an *Ad hoc* Committee. It consists of 18 Members. Out of these, 12 Members are from Lok Sabha nominated by the Speaker and 6 Members are from Rajya Sabha nominated by the Chairman.

The main function of the Committee is to review the Rate of Dividend payable by the Railways undertaking to General Revenues as well as other ancillary matters in connection with the Railway Finance *vis-a-vis* the General Finance and make recommendations thereon.

The Railway Convention Committee, 1949 was the first Committee after independence. This Committee and subsequent Committees confined themselves to determining the Rate of Dividend payable by the Railways to General Revenues. Since 1971, the Railway Convention Committees have been taking up subjects for examination and report which have a bearing on the working of the Railways.

Committee on Empowerment of Women

This Committee came into being on 29 April 1997 as a consequence of identical Resolutions adopted by both the Houses of Parliament on the occasion of the International Women's Day on 8 March 1996.

The Committee consists of 30 Members, 20 nominated by the Speaker, Lok Sabha from amongst the Members of Lok Sabha and 10 nominated by the Chairman, Rajya Sabha from amongst the Members of the Rajya Sabha. The term of the Committee is of one year. A Minister is not nominated to the Committee.

The Committee has been primarily mandated with the task of reviewing and monitoring the measures taken by the Union Government in the direction of securing for women equality, status and dignity in all matters. The Committee would also suggest necessary correctives for improving the status/condition of women in respect of matters within the purview of the Union Government.

Another important function of the Committee is to examine the measures taken by the Union Government for comprehensive education and adequate representation of women in Legislative Bodies/services and other fields. The Committee may also consider the report of the National Commission for Women and examine such other matters as may seem fit to or are specifically referred to it by the Lok Sabha or the Speaker and the Rajya Sabha or the Chairman, Rajya Sabha.

House Committee

The Committee consists of 12 Members nominated by the Speaker. The term of the Committee is one year. The *House Committee* deals with the residential accommodation and other amenities for Members.

Joint Committee on Salaries and Allowances of Members of Parliament

The *Joint Committee on Salaries and Allowances of Members of Parliament* is constituted under the Salary, Allowances and Pension of Members of Parliament Act, 1954, apart from framing rules for regulating payment of salary, allowances and pension of Members also frames rules in respect of amenities like medical, housing, telephone, postal, constituency and secretarial facilities.

The Committee has one year term and elects its Chairperson.

Library Committee

The *Library Committee* consisting of Members from both Houses, considers matters concerning the Library of Parliament. The Committee consists of 9 Members, 6 from Lok Sabha and 3 from Rajya Sabha. Deputy Speaker is the *ex officio* Chairperson of the Committee. The Committee has a term of one year.

Ad hoc Committees

Certain Parliamentary Committees are appointed by the House or the Speaker or the Presiding Officers of both the Houses in consultation with each other as the case may be from time-to-time on *ad hoc* basis as and when necessary for a particular purpose, such as Select/Joint Committee on a Bill or policy matters - for example Select Committee on the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 1996; Joint Committee on the Constitution (Eighty-first Amendment) Bill, 1996; Joint Committee on the Broadcasting Bill, 1997; Joint Committee on Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 1998; Committee to inquire into the misconduct of Members of Lok Sabha (2007) and Committee on Draft Five Year Plans and Joint Committee to suggest facilities and remuneration for Members of Parliament (1993).

The Joint Parliamentary Committees (JPCs) on special issues are constituted to investigate serious issues which have greatly agitated the public mind and which involves frauds or corruption on large scale. Such Committees are

set up on the basis of a consensus arrived at between the Government and the Opposition. JPC is a well known and potent investigative mechanism of Parliament. These Committees become *functus officio* after submission of their report to the Parliament. The following JPCs in this category have been constituted so far— (i) Joint Committee to enquire into Bofors Contract (1987); (ii) Joint Committee to enquire into Irregularities in Securities and Banking transactions (1992); (iii) Joint Committee on Stock Market Scam and matters relating thereto (2001); (iv) Joint Committee on Pesticide residues in and safety standards for soft drinks, fruit juice and other beverages (2003); and (v) Joint Committee to examine matters relating to allocation and Pricing of Telecom Licences and Spectrum (2011).

Besides, the following Committees are being appointed by the Presiding Officers on *ad hoc* basis for particular purposes for the last few years on the basis of periodically assessing their need viz.: Joint Committee on Food Management in Parliament House Complex; Joint Committee on Installation of Portraits/Statues of National Leaders and Parliamentarians in Parliament House Complex; Joint Committee on Maintenance of Heritage Character and Development of Parliament House Complex and Joint Committee on Security in Parliament House Complex, etc.

The constitution, composition and functions, etc. of these Committees constituted by the House through motions are laid down in the motions and in the case of Committees constituted by the Presiding Officers their terms of reference are decided by the Speaker, Lok Sabha, and the Chairman, Rajya Sabha, in consultation with each other as may be necessary, subject to the relevant rules and directions relating to Parliamentary Committees.

House Specific *ad hoc* Committees

The Committee on Provision of Computers to Members of Lok Sabha; the Committee on Ethics; the Committee on Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (Lok Sabha) and the Committee on Violation of Protocol Norms and Contemptuous Behaviour of Government Officers with Members of Lok Sabha are House specific *ad hoc* Committees of Lok Sabha.

Departmentally Related Standing Committees

A full-fledged system of 17 Departmentally Related Standing Committees came into being in April, 1993 covering under their jurisdiction all Central Ministries/Departments. The system was re-structured in July, 2004 when the number of DRSCs was increased from 17 to 24 and the membership of each DRSC has been reduced from 45 to 31 Members. These re-structured Committees are as under:—

Sl. No.	Name of the Committee
1.	Committee on Commerce
2.	Committee on Home Affairs
3.	Committee on Human Resource Development
4.	Committee on Industry
5.	Committee on Science & Technology, Environment & Forests
6.	Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture
7.	Committee on Health and Family Welfare
8.	Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice
9.	Committee on Agriculture
10.	Committee on Information Technology
11.	Committee on Defence
12.	Committee on Energy
13.	Committee on External Affairs
14.	Committee on Finance
15.	Committee on Food, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution
16.	Committee on Labour
17.	Committee on Petroleum and Natural Gas
18.	Committee on Railways
19.	Committee on Urban Development
20.	Committee on Water Resources
21.	Committee on Chemicals and Fertilizers
22.	Committee on Rural Development
23.	Committee on Coal and Steel
24.	Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment

Out of the 24 Committees, 8 Committees (Sl. Nos. 1 to 8) are serviced by the Rajya Sabha Secretariat and 16 Committees (Sl. Nos. 9 to 24) by the Lok Sabha Secretariat.

Each of these Standing Committees consists of not more than 31 Members – 21 to be nominated by the Speaker from amongst the Members of Lok Sabha and 10 to be nominated by the Chairman, Rajya Sabha, from amongst the Members of Rajya Sabha. A Minister is not nominated to these Committees. The term of Members of these Committees is one year.

With reference to the Ministries/Departments under their purview, the functions of these Committees are:

- (a) Consideration of Demands for Grants.
- (b) Examination of Bills referred to them by the Chairman, Rajya Sabha, or the Speaker, Lok Sabha, as the case may be.
- (c) Consideration of Annual Reports.
- (d) Consideration of national basic long term policy documents presented to the House and referred to the Committee by the Chairman, Rajya Sabha, or the Speaker, Lok Sabha, as the case may be.

These Committees do not consider matters of day-to-day administration of the Ministries/ Departments concerned.

The Departmentally Related Standing Committee System is a path-breaking endeavour of parliamentary surveillance over administration. With the emphasis of their functioning to concentrate on long-term plans, policies and the philosophies guiding the working of the Executive, these Committees are in a very privileged position to provide necessary direction, guidance and inputs for broad policy formulations and in the achievement of the long-term national perspective by the Executive.

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**Cover Photo: Main Committee Room in
Parliament House Annexe*