



## Parliamentary Committees

### MEANING

The Parliament is too unwieldy a body to deliberate effectively the issues that come up before it. The functions of the Parliament are varied, complex and voluminous. Moreover, it has neither the adequate time nor necessary expertise to make a detailed scrutiny of all legislative measures and other matters. Therefore, it is assisted by a number of committees in the discharge of its duties.

The Constitution of India makes a mention of these committees at different places, but without making any specific provisions regarding their composition, tenure, functions, etc. All these matters are dealt by the rules of two Houses. Accordingly, a parliamentary committee means a committee that:

1. Is appointed or elected by the House or nominated by the Speaker / Chairman<sup>1</sup>
2. Works under the direction of the Speaker / Chairman
3. Presents its report to the House or to the Speaker / Chairman
4. Has a secretariat provided by the Lok Sabha / Rajya Sabha

The consultative committees, which also consist of members of Parliament, are not parliamentary committees as they do not fulfill above four conditions.<sup>2</sup>

## CLASSIFICATION

Broadly, parliamentary committees are of two kinds—Standing Committees and <sup>Ad Hoc</sup> Committees. The former are permanent (constituted every year or periodically) and work on a continuous basis, while the latter are temporary and cease to exist on completion of the task assigned to them.

### **Standing Committees**

On the basis of the nature of functions performed by them, standing committees can be classified into the following six categories:

#### ***1. Financial Committees***

- (a) Public Accounts Committee
- (b) Estimates Committee
- (c) Committee on Public Undertakings

#### ***2. Departmental Standing Committees (24)***

#### ***3. Committees to Inquire***

- (a) Committee on Petitions
- (b) Committee of Privileges
- (c) Ethics Committee

#### ***4. Committees to Scrutinise and Control***

- (a) Committee on Government Assurances
- (b) Committee on Subordinate Legislation
- (c) Committee on Papers Laid on the Table
- (d) Committee on Welfare of SCs and STs
- (e) Committee on Empowerment of Women
- (f) Joint Committee<sup>3</sup> on Offices of Profit

#### ***5. Committees Relating to the Day-to-Day Business of the House***

- (a) Business Advisory Committee

- (b) Committee on Private Members' Bills and Resolutions
- (c) Rules Committee
- (d) Committee on Absence of Members from Sitzings of the House

***6. House-Keeping Committees or Service Committees (i.e., Committees concerned with the Provision of Facilities and Services to Members):***

- (a) General Purposes Committee
- (b) House Committee
- (c) Library Committee
- (d) Joint Committee on Salaries and Allowances of Members

## **Ad Hoc Committees**

*Ad hoc* committees can be divided into two categories, that is, Inquiry Committees and Advisory Committees.

1. Inquiry Committees are constituted from time to time, either by the two Houses on a motion adopted in that behalf, or by the Speaker / Chairman, to inquire into and report on specific subjects. For example:
  - (a) Committee on the Conduct of Certain Members during President's Address
  - (b) Committee on Draft Five-Year Plan
  - (c) Railway Convention Committee<sup>4</sup>
  - (d) Committee on Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS)
  - (e) Joint Committee on Bofors Contract
  - (f) Joint Committee on Fertilizer Pricing
  - (g) Joint Committee to Enquire into Irregularities in Securities and Banking Transactions
  - (h) Joint Committee on Stock Market Scam
  - (i) Joint Committee on Security in Parliament Complex
  - (j) Committee on Provision of Computers to Members of Parliament, Offices of Political Parties and Officers of the Lok Sabha Secretariat
  - (k) Committee on Food Management in Parliament House Complex
  - (l) Committee on Installation of Portraits / Statues of National Leaders

and Parliamentarians in Parliament House Complex

- (m) Joint Committee on Maintenance of Heritage Character and Development of Parliament House Complex
- (n) Committee on Violation of Protocol Norms and Contemptuous Behaviour of Government Officers with Members of Lok Sabha
- (o) Joint Committee to Examine Matters Relating to Allocation and Pricing of Telecom Licences and Spectrum

2. Advisory Committees include select or joint committees on bills, which are appointed to consider and report on particular bills. These committees are distinguishable from the other <sup>ad hoc</sup> committees in as much as they are concerned with bills and the procedure to be followed by them is laid down in the Rules of Procedure and the Directions by the Speaker / Chairman.

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 to this effect has to be moved and adopted 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 the members 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 to various clauses can be moved 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.

## FINANCIAL COMMITTEES

### ***Public Accounts Committee***

This committee was set up first in 1921 under the provisions of the Government of India Act of 1919 and has since been in existence. At present, it consists of 22 members (15 from the Lok Sabha and 7 from the Rajya

Sabha). The members are elected by the Parliament every year from amongst its members according to the principle of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote. Thus, all parties get due representation in it. The term of office of the members is one year. A minister cannot be elected as a member of the committee. The chairman of the committee is appointed from amongst its members by the Speaker. Until 1966 – '67, the chairman of the committee belonged to the ruling party. However, since 1967 a convention has developed whereby the chairman of the committee is selected invariably from the Opposition.

The function of the committee is to examine the annual audit reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG), which are laid before the Parliament by the President. The CAG submits three audit reports to the President, namely, audit report on appropriation accounts, audit report on finance accounts and audit report on public undertakings.

The committee examines public expenditure not only from legal and formal point of view to discover technical irregularities but also from the point of view of economy, prudence, wisdom and propriety to bring out the cases of waste, loss, corruption, extravagance, inefficiency and nugatory expenses.

*In more detail, the functions of the committee are:*

1. To examine the appropriation accounts and the finance accounts of the Union government and any other accounts laid before the Lok Sabha. The appropriation accounts compare the actual expenditure with the expenditure sanctioned by the Parliament through the <sup>Appropriation Act</sup>, while the finance accounts shows the annual receipts and disbursements of the Union Government.
2. In scrutinising the appropriation accounts and the audit report of CAG on it, the committee has to satisfy itself that
  - (a) The money that has been disbursed was legally available for the applied service or purpose
  - (b) The expenditure conforms to the authority that governs it
  - (c) Every re-appropriation has been made in accordance with the related rules
3. To examine the accounts of state corporations, trading concerns and manufacturing projects and the audit report of CAG on them (except

those public undertakings which are allotted to the Committee on Public Undertakings)

4. To examine the accounts of autonomous and semi-autonomous bodies, the audit of which is conducted by the CAG
5. To consider the report of the CAG relating to the audit of any receipt or to examine the accounts of stores and stocks
6. To examine the money spent on any service during a financial year in excess of the amount granted by the Lok Sabha for that purpose

In the fulfillment of the above functions, the committee is assisted by the CAG. In fact, the CAG acts as a guide, friend and philosopher of the committee.

On the role played by the committee, Ashok Chanda (who himself has been a CAG of India) observed: “Over a period of years, the committee has entirely fulfilled the expectation that it should develop into a powerful force in the control of public expenditure. It may be claimed that the traditions established and conventions developed by the Public Accounts Committee conform to the highest traditions of a parliamentary democracy.”<sup>5</sup>

*However, the effectiveness of the role of the committee is limited by the following:*

- (a) It is not concerned with the questions of policy in broader sense.
- (b) It conducts a post-mortem examination of accounts (showing the expenditure already incurred).
- (c) It cannot intervene in the matters of day-to-day administration.
- (d) Its recommendations are advisory and not binding on the ministries.
- (e) It is not vested with the power of disallowance of expenditures by the departments.
- (f) It is not an executive body and hence, cannot issue an order. Only the Parliament can take a final decision on its findings.

## ***Estimates Committee***

The origin of this committee can be traced to the standing financial committee set up in 1921. The first Estimates Committee in the post-independence era was constituted in 1950 on the recommendation of John Mathai, the then finance minister. Originally, it had 25 members but in 1956

its membership was raised to 30. All the thirty members are from Lok Sabha only. The Rajya Sabha has no representation in this committee. These members are elected by the Lok Sabha every year from amongst its own members, according to the principles of proportional representation by means of a single transferable vote. Thus, all parties get due representation in it. The term of office is one year. A minister cannot be elected as a member of the committee. The chairman of the committee is appointed by the Speaker from amongst its members and he is invariably from the ruling party.

The function of the committee is to examine the estimates included in the budget and suggest 'economies' in public expenditure. Hence, it has been described as a 'continuous economy committee'.

*In more detail, the functions of the committee are:*

1. To report what economies, improvements in organisation, efficiency and administrative reform consistent with the policy underlying the estimates, can be affected
2. To suggest alternative policies in order to bring about efficiency and economy in administration
3. To examine whether the money is well laid out within the limits of the policy implied in the estimates
4. To suggest the form in which the estimates are to be presented to Parliament

The Committee shall not exercise its functions in relation to such public undertakings as are allotted to the Committee on Public Undertakings. The Committee may continue the examination of the estimates from time to time, throughout the financial year and report to the House as its examination proceeds. It shall not be incumbent on the Committee to examine the entire estimates of any one year. The demands for grants may be finally voted despite the fact that the Committee has made no report.

*However, the effectiveness of the role of the committee is limited by the following:*

- (a) It examines the budget estimates only after they have been voted by the Parliament, and not before that.
- (b) It cannot question the policy laid down by the Parliament.
- (c) Its recommendations are advisory and not binding on the ministries.



- (d) It examines every year only certain selected ministries and departments. Thus, by rotation, it would cover all of them over a number of years.
- (e) It lacks the expert assistance of the CAG which is available to the Public Accounts Committee.
- (f) Its work is in the nature of a post-mortem.

### ***Committee on Public Undertakings***

This committee was created in 1964 on the recommendation of the Krishna Menon Committee. Originally, it had 15 members (10 from the Lok Sabha and 5 from the Rajya Sabha). However, in 1974, its membership was raised to 22 (15 from the Lok Sabha and 7 from the Rajya Sabha). The members of this committee are elected by the Parliament every year from amongst its own members according to the principle of proportional representation by means of a single transferable vote. Thus, all parties get due representation in it. The term of office of the members is one year. A minister cannot be elected as a member of the committee. The chairman of the committee is appointed by the Speaker from amongst its members who are drawn from the Lok Sabha only. Thus, the members of the committee who are from the Rajya Sabha cannot be appointed as the chairman.

#### *The functions of the committee are:*

1. To examine the reports and accounts of public undertakings
2. To examine the reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General on public undertakings
3. To examine (in the context of autonomy and efficiency of public undertakings) whether the affairs of the public undertakings are being managed in accordance with sound business principles and prudent commercial practices
4. To exercise such other functions vested in the public accounts committee and the estimates committee in relation to public undertakings which are allotted to it by the Speaker from time to time

#### *The committee is not to examine and investigate any of the following:*

- (i) Matters of major government policy as distinct from business or commercial functions of the public undertakings
- (ii) Matters of day-to-day administration



(iii) Matters for the consideration of which machinery is established by any special statute under which a particular public undertaking is established

*Further, the effectiveness of the role of the committee is limited by the following:*

- (a) It cannot take up the examination of more than ten to twelve public undertakings in a year.
- (b) Its work is in the nature of a post-mortem.
- (c) It does not look into technical matters as its members are not technical experts.
- (d) Its recommendations are advisory and not binding on the ministries.

## DEPARTMENTAL STANDING COMMITTEES

On the recommendation of the Rules Committee of the Lok Sabha, 17 Departmentally-Related Standing Committees (DRSCs) were set up in the Parliament in 1993.<sup>6</sup> In 2004, seven more such committees were setup, thus increasing their number from 17 to 24.

The main objective of the standing committees is to secure more accountability of the Executive (i.e., the Council of Ministers) to the Parliament, particularly financial accountability. They also assist the Parliament in debating the budget more effectively.<sup>7</sup>

The 24 standing committees cover under their jurisdiction all the ministries / departments of the Central Government.

Each standing committee consists of 31 members (21 from Lok Sabha and 10 from Rajya Sabha). The members of the Lok Sabha are nominated by the Speaker from amongst its own members, just as the members of the Rajya Sabha are nominated by the Chairman from amongst its members.<sup>8</sup>

A minister is not eligible to be nominated as a member of any of the standing committees. In case a member, after his nomination to any of the standing committees, is appointed a minister, he then ceases to be a member of the committee.

The term of office of each standing committee is one year from the date of its constitution.

Out of the 24 standing committees, 8 work under the Rajya Sabha and 16

under the Lok Sabha.<sup>9</sup>

The 24 standing committees and the ministries / departments placed under their jurisdiction are shown below in [Table 23.1](#).

**Table 23.1** *Departmental Standing Committees*

| <i>Sl. No.</i>                         | <i>Name of the Committees</i>                            | <i>Ministries / Departments Covered</i>     |
|--|--|---|
| <b>I. Committees under Rajya Sabha</b> |  |   |
| 1.                                     | Committee on Commerce                                    | Commerce and Industry                       |
| 2.                                     | Committee on Home Affairs                                | (1) Home Affairs                            |
|  |  | (2) Development of North-Eastern Region     |
| 3.                                     | Committee on Human Resource Development                  | (1) Human Resource Development              |
|  |  | (2) Youth Affairs and Sports                |
| 4.                                     | Committee on Industry                                    | (1) Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises |
|  |  | (2) Small Scale Industries                  |
|  |  | (3) Agro and Rural Industries               |
| 5.                                     | Committee on Science & Technology, Environment & Forests | (1) Science and Technology                  |
|  |  | (2) Space                                   |
|  |  | (3) Earth Sciences                          |
|  |  | (4) Atomic Energy                           |
|  |  | (5) Environment & Forests                   |
| 6.                                     | Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture              | (1) Civil Aviation                          |

|                                       |  |   |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
|                                       |  | (2) Shipping, Road Transport and Highways     |
|                                       |  | (3) Culture                                   |
|                                       |  | (4) Tourism                                   |
| 7.                                    | Committee on Health and Family Welfare                     | Health and Family Welfare                     |
| 8.                                    | Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice | (1) Law and Justice                           |
|                                       |  | (2) Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions |
| <b>II. Committees under Lok Sabha</b> |  |   |
| 9.                                    | Committee on Agriculture                                   | (1) Agriculture                               |
|                                       |  | (2) Food Processing Industries                |
| 10.                                   | Committee on Information Technology                        | (1) Communications and Information Technology |
|                                       |  | (2) Information & Broadcasting                |
| 11.                                   | Committee on Defence                                       | Defence                                       |
| 12.                                   | Committee on Energy  | (1) New and Renewable Energy                  |
|                                       |  | (2) Power                                     |
| 13.                                   | Committee on External Affairs                              | (1) External Affairs                          |
|                                       |  | (2) Non Resident Indians Affairs              |
| 14.                                   | Committee on Finance                                       | (1) Finance                                   |
|                                       |  | (2) Company Affairs                           |

|     |   |  |
|-----|---|--|
|     |   | (3) Planning                                   |
|     |   | (4) Statistics and Programme Implementation    |
| 15. | Committee on Food, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution | Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution |
| 16. | Committee on Labour   | (1) Labour and Employment                      |
|     |   | (2) Textiles                                   |
| 17. | Committee on Petroleum & Natural Gas                        | Petroleum and Natural Gas                      |
| 18. | Committee on Railways                                       | Railways                                       |
| 19. | Committee on Urban Development                              | (1) Urban Development                          |
|     |   | (2) Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation      |
| 20. | Committee on Water Resources                                | Water Resources                                |
| 21. | Committee on Chemicals and Fertilizers                      | Chemicals and Fertilizers                      |
| 22. | Committee on Rural Development                              | (1) Rural Development                          |
|     |   | (2) Panchayati Raj                             |
| 23. | Committee on Coal and Steel                                 | (1) Coal and Mines                             |
|     |   | (2) Steel                                      |
| 24. | Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment                 | (1) Social Justice and Empowerment             |
|     |   | (2) Tribal Affairs                             |

*The functions of each of the standing committees are:*

1. To consider the demands for grants of the concerned ministries / departments before they are discussed and voted in the Lok Sabha. Its report should not suggest anything of the nature of cut motions

2. To examine bills pertaining to the concerned ministries / departments
3. To consider annual reports of ministries / departments
4. To consider national basic long-term policy documents presented to the Houses

*The following limitations are imposed on the functioning of these standing committees:*

- (i) They should not consider the matters of day-to-day administration of the concerned ministries / departments.
- (ii) They should not generally consider the matters which are considered by other parliamentary committees.

It should be noted here that the recommendations of these committees are advisory in nature and hence not binding on the Parliament.

*The following procedure shall be followed by each of the standing committees in their consideration of the demands for grants, and making a report thereon to the Houses.*

- (a) After general discussion on the budget in the Houses is over, the Houses shall be adjourned for a fixed period.
- (b) The committees shall consider the demands for grants of the concerned ministries during the aforesaid period.
- (c) The committees shall make their report within the period and shall not ask for more time.
- (d) The demands for grants shall be considered by the House in the light of the reports of the committees.
- (e) There shall be a separate report on the demands for grants of each ministry.

*The following procedure shall be followed by each of the standing committees in examining the bills and making report thereon.*

- (a) The committee shall consider the general principles and clauses of bills referred to it.
- (b) The Committee shall consider only such bills as introduced in either of the Houses and referred to it.
- (c) The Committee shall make report on bills in a given time.

*The merits of the standing committee system in the Parliament are:*

- (1) Their proceedings are devoid of any party bias.

- (2) The procedure adopted by them is more flexible than in the Lok Sabha.
- (3) The system makes parliamentary control over executive much more detailed, close, continuous, in-depth and comprehensive.
- (4) The system ensures economy and efficiency in public expenditure as the ministries / departments would now be more careful in formulating their demands.
- (5) They facilitate opportunities to all the members of Parliament to participate and understand the functioning of the government and contribute to it.
- (6) They can avail of expert opinion or public opinion to make the reports. They are authorised to invite experts and eminent persons to testify before them and incorporate their opinions in their reports.
- (7) The opposition parties and the Rajya Sabha can now play a greater role in exercising financial control over the executive.

## **COMMITTEES TO INQUIRE**

### **Committee on Petitions**

This committee examines petitions on bills and on matters of general public importance. It also entertains representations from individuals and associations on matters pertaining to Union subjects. The Lok Sabha committee consists of 15 members, while the Rajya Sabha committee consists of 10 members.

### **Committee of Privileges**

The functions of this committee are semi-judicial in nature. It examines the cases of breach of privileges of the House and its members and recommends appropriate action. The Lok Sabha committee has 15 members, while the Rajya Sabha committee has 10 members.

### **Ethics Committee**

This committee was constituted in Rajya Sabha in 1997 and in Lok Sabha in 2000. It enforces the code of conduct of members of Parliament. It examines the cases of misconduct and recommends appropriate action. Thus, it is

engaged in maintaining discipline and decorum in Parliament.

## **COMMITTEES TO SCRUTINISE AND CONTROL**

### **Committee on Government Assurances**

This committee examines the assurances, promises and undertakings given by ministers from time to time on the floor of the House and reports on the extent to which they have been carried through. In the Lok Sabha, it consists of 15 members and in the Rajya Sabha, it consists of 10 members. It was constituted in 1953.

### **Committee on Subordinate Legislation**

This committee examines and reports to the House whether the powers to make regulations, rules, sub-rules and bye-laws delegated by the Parliament or conferred by the Constitution to the Executive are being properly exercised by it. In both the Houses, the committee consists of 15 members. It was constituted in 1953.

### **Committee on Papers Laid on the Table**

This committee was constituted in 1975. The Lok Sabha Committee has 15 members, while the Rajya Sabha Committee has 10 members. It examines all papers laid on the table of the House by ministers to see whether they comply with provisions of the Constitution, or the related Act or Rule. It does not examine statutory notifications and orders that fall under the jurisdiction of the Committee on Subordinate Legislation.

### **Committee on Welfare of SCs and STs**

This committee consists of 30 members (20 from Lok Sabha and 10 from Rajya Sabha). Its functions are: (i) to consider the reports of the National Commission for the SCs and the National Commission for the STs; (ii) to examine all matters relating to the welfare of SCs and STs, like implementation of constitutional and statutory safeguards, working of welfare programmes, etc.



## **Committee on Empowerment of Women**

This committee was constituted in 1997 and consists of 30 members (20 from Lok Sabha and 10 from Rajya Sabha). It considers the reports of the National Commission for Women and examines the measures taken by the Union Government to secure status, dignity and equality for women in all fields.

## **Joint Committee on Offices of Profit**

This committee examines the composition and character of committees and other bodies appointed by the Central, state and union territory governments and recommends whether persons holding these offices should be disqualified from being elected as members of Parliament or not. It consists of 15 members (10 from Lok Sabha and 5 from Rajya Sabha).

## **COMMITTEES RELATING TO THE DAY-TO-DAY BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

### **Business Advisory Committee**

This committee regulates the programme and time table of the House. It allocates time for the transaction of legislative and other business brought before the House by the government. The Lok Sabha committee consists of 15 members including the Speaker as its chairman. In the Rajya Sabha, it has 11 members including the Chairman as its ex-officio chairman.

### **Committee on Private Members' Bills and Resolutions**

This committee classifies bills and allocates time for the discussion on bills and resolutions introduced by private members (other than ministers). This is a special committee of the Lok Sabha and consists of 15 members including the Deputy Speaker as its chairman. The Rajya Sabha does not have any such committee. The same function in the Rajya Sabha is performed by the Business Advisory Committee of that House.

### **Rules Committee**

This committee considers the matters of procedure and conduct of business in the House and recommends necessary amendments or additions to the rules of the House. The Lok Sabha committee consists of 15 members including the Speaker as its ex-officio chairman. In the Rajya Sabha, it consists of 16 members including the Chairman as its ex-officio chairman.

### **Committee on Absence of Members**

This committee considers all applications from members for leave of absence from the sittings of the House, and examines the cases of members who have been absent for a period of 60 days or more without permission. It is a special committee of the Lok Sabha and consists of 15 members. There is no such committee in the Rajya Sabha and all such matters are dealt by the House itself.

## **HOUSE-KEEPING COMMITTEES**

### ***General Purposes Committee***

This committee considers and advises on matters concerning affairs of the House, which do not fall within the jurisdiction of any other parliamentary committee. In each House, this committee consists of the presiding officer (Speaker / Chairman) as its ex-officio chairman, Deputy Speaker (Deputy Chairman in the case of Rajya Sabha), members of panel of chairpersons (panel of vice-chairpersons in the case of Rajya Sabha), chairpersons of all the departmental standing committees of the House, leaders of recognised parties and groups in the House and such other members as nominated by the presiding officer.

### ***House Committee***

This committee deals with residential accommodation of members and other amenities like food, medical aid, etc., accorded to them in their houses and hostels in Delhi. Both the Houses have their respective House Committees. In the Lok Sabha, it consists of 12 members.

### ***Library Committee***

This committee considers all matters relating to library of the Parliament and assists the members in utilising the library's services. It consists of nine members (six from Lok Sabha and three from Rajya Sabha).

### ***Joint Committee on Salaries and Allowances of Members***

This committee was constituted under the Salary, Allowances and Pension of Members of Parliament Act, 1954. It consists of 15 members (10 from Lok Sabha and 5 from Rajya Sabha). It frames rules for regulating payment of salary, allowances and pension to members of Parliament.

## **CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEES**

Consultative committees are attached to various ministries / departments of the Central Government. They consist of members of both the Houses of Parliament. The Minister / Minister of State in charge of the Ministry concerned acts as the chairman of the consultative committee of that ministry.

These committees provide a forum for informal discussions between the ministers and the members of Parliament on policies and programmes of the government and the manner of their implementation.

These committees are constituted by the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs. The guidelines regarding the composition, functions and procedures of these committees are formulated by this Ministry. The Ministry also makes arrangements for holding their meetings both during the session and the inter-session period of Parliament.

The membership of these committees is voluntary and is left to the choice of the members and the leaders of their parties. The maximum membership of a committee is 30 and the minimum is 10.

These committees are normally constituted after the new Lok Sabha is constituted, after General Elections for the Lok Sabha. In other words, these committees shall stand dissolved upon dissolution of every Lok Sabha and shall be reconstituted upon constitution of each Lok Sabha<sup>10</sup>.

In addition, separate Informal Consultative Committees of the members of Parliament are also constituted for all the Railway Zones. Members of Parliament belonging to the area falling under a particular Railway Zone are

nominated on the Informal Consultative Committee of that Railway Zone.

Unlike the Consultative Committees attached to various ministries / departments, the meetings of the Informal Consultative Committees are to be arranged during the session periods only.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. A Minister is not eligible for election or nomination to the Financial Committees, Departmental Standing Committees, and Committees on Empowerment of Women, Government Assurances, Petitions, Subordinate Legislation and Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
2. Consultative Committees are explained at the end of this Chapter.
3. A joint committee consists of members of both the Houses of Parliament.
4. 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 which have a bearing on the working of the Railways and Railway Finances.
5. Ashok Chanda: *Indian Administration*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd, London, 1967, P. 180.
6. In 1989, three Standing Committees were constituted which dealt with Agriculture, Science & Technology and Environment & Forests. In 1993, they were superseded by the Departmentally-Related Standing Committees (DRSCs).
7. While inaugurating the Standing Committee system in the Central Hall of Parliament on 31<sup>st</sup> March 1993, the then Vice-President of India and the Chairman of Rajya Sabha, K.R. Narayanan observed that the main purpose of these Committees is: “to ensure the accountability of Government to Parliament through more detailed consideration of measures in these Committees. The intention is not to weaken or criticise the administration but to strengthen it by investing it with more meaningful Parliamentary support”.
8. Till 13<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha, each Standing Committee consisted of not more than 45 members – 30 to be nominated by the Speaker from amongst the

members of Lok Sabha and 15 to be nominated by the Chairman from amongst the members of Rajya Sabha. However, with restructuring of DRSCs in July 2004, each DRSC consists of 31 members – 21 from Lok Sabha and 10 from Rajya Sabha.

9. The procedure regarding constitution and functioning of DRSCs, serviced by Lok Sabha, has been enumerated in Rules 331C to 331Q of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Lok Sabha. Rules 268 to 277 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Rajya Sabha govern DRSCs serviced by Rajya Sabha.
10. After the constitution of the 16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha, 35 consultative committees were constituted in 2014.