

A good deal of legislative business is transacted by Committees of the House, known as Parliamentary Committees. Parliamentary Committee means a Committee which is appointed or elected by the House or nominated by the Speaker and which works under the direction of the Speaker and presents its report to the House or to the Speaker and the Secretariat for which is provided by the Lok Sabha Secretariat.

Parliamentary Committees are of two kinds:

- Standing Committees
- Ad hoc Committees

Standing Committees are permanent and regular Committees which are constituted from time to time in pursuance of the provisions of an Act of Parliament or Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha. The work of these Committees is of continuous nature. Whereas ad-hoc Committee are temporary one and cease to exist on completion of the task assigned to them.

The Financial Committees, DRSCs and some other Committees come under the category of 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.

Standing Committees

There are six standing Committees on the basis of their function

- ❑ Financial Committees
 - Public accounts Committee
 - Estimates Committee
 - Committee on Public undertakings
- ❑ Departmental related standing Committee
- ❑ Committees to inquire
 - Committee on petitions
 - Committee on privileges
 - Ethics Committee
- ❑ Committee to scrutinize and control
 - Committee on government assurances

- Committee on subordinate Legislation
- Committee on Papers laid on the table
- Committee on the welfare of SC's and ST's
- Committee on Empowerment of Women
- Joint Committee on Offices of Profit
- ❑ Committees relating to the day-to day business of the House
 - Business Advisory Committee
 - Committee on Private Members' Bills and Resolutions
 - Rules Committee
 - Committee on the absence of members

6. Service Committees or Housekeeping Committees

- General Purposes Committee
- House Committee.
- Library Committee
- Joint Committee on Salaries and Allowances of Members

Ad Hoc Committee

Ad hoc Committees are Committees that are appointed for a limited time to meet specific goals.

Ad Hoc Committees are of two types:

- Inquiry Committee
- Advisory Committee - to report on specific bills

Financial Committees

1. Public Accounts Committee

Historical Background

- ❑ The Montague-Chelmsford Reforms or Government of India act 1919 prompted the creation of the Committee on Public Accounts in 1921.
- ❑ With the enactment of the Constitution on January 26, 1950, the Committee became a Parliamentary Committee, accountable to the Speaker and led by a non-official Chairman nominated by the Speaker from among the Lok Sabha Members elected to the Committee.
- ❑ Until 1966-67, the Chairman of the Committee belonged to the ruling party.

- ❑ Since 1967 a convention has developed, the Chairman of the Committee is selected invariably from the opposition.

Composition and tenure

- ❑ The Committee 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 a single transferable vote.
- ❑ The term of office of 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 the members.

Functions

The functions of the Public Accounts Committee are:

- ❑ Its job is to keep a vigil on the spending and performance of the government, to bring to light inefficiencies, wasteful expenditure, and indiscretion in the implementation of policies approved by Parliament.
- ❑ To make recommendations to streamline the administration for efficient, speedy and economical implementation of policy.
- ❑ The function of the Committee is to examine the audit reports of Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG), annually.
- ❑ The report laid before the Parliament by the president
- ❑ The CAG submits three reports,
 - Audit report on appropriation accounts
 - Audit report on finance accounts
 - Audit report on public undertakings
- ❑ The Committee examines public expenditure not only from a legal and formal point of view but also from the economic point of view to reduce inefficiency and extravagance.
- ❑ To examine the union government's appropriation and finance accounts, as well as any other accounts laid before the Lok Sabha.
- ❑ To examine the accounts of state corporations, trading concerns and manufacturing projects and the CAG reports on them.
- ❑ To examine the accounts of and semi-autonomous

bodies, and the CAG report on them.

- ❑ To examine any money spent on any service throughout a fiscal year in excess of the amount granted by the Lok Sabha for that purpose.

2. Estimates Committee

The Committee on Estimates, constituted for the first time in 1950, is a Parliamentary Committee consisting of 30 members, elected every year by the Lok Sabha from amongst its members. The Chairperson of the Committee is appointed by the Speaker from amongst its members. A Minister cannot be elected as a member of the Committee and if a member after selection to the Committee is appointed a Minister, the member ceases to be a Member of the Committee from the date of such appointment.

Term of Office

The term of office of the Committee is one year.

Functions

The functions of the Estimates Committee are:

- ❑ to report what economies, improvements in organisation, efficiency or administrative reform, consistent with the policy underlying the estimates may be affected;
- ❑ to suggest alternative policies in order to bring about efficiency and economy in administration;
- ❑ to examine whether the money is well laid out within the limits of the policy implied in the estimates; and
- ❑ to suggest the form in which the estimates shall be presented to Parliament.

The Committee does not exercise its functions in relation to such Public Undertakings as are allotted to the Committee on Public Undertakings by the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business of Lok Sabha or by the Speaker.

3. Public Undertakings

Composition and tenure:

The Committee on Public Undertakings is a Parliamentary Committee consisting of 22 Members, fifteen of whom are elected by the Lok Sabha every year from amongst its members according to the principle of proportional representation by means of a single transferable vote and seven Members to be nominated by Rajya Sabha for being associated with the Committee.

The Chairman is appointed by the Speaker from amongst the Members of the Committee. A Minister is not eligible to become a Member of the Committee. If a member after his election to the Committee is appointed

a Minister, he ceases to be a Member of the Committee from the date of such appointment. The term of the Committee does not exceed one year.

Functions:

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.
- (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.

NB: The Committee does not, however, examine matters of major Government policy and matters of day-to-day administration of the Undertakings.

Department-related Standing Committees (DRSCs)

Composition and Tenure

There are 24 Department-related Standing Committees (DRSCs). Each of these Committees have 31 members – 21 from Lok Sabha and 10 from Rajya Sabha.

The 17 Departmentally Related Standing Committees were formally constituted with effect from April, 1993. After experiencing the working of the DRSC system for over a decade, the system was restructured in July, 2004 wherein the number of DRSCs was increased from 17 to 24.

These members are to be nominated by the Speaker of Lok Sabha or the Chairman of Rajya Sabha respectively. The term of office of these Committees does not exceed one year.

These Committees are serviced either by Lok Sabha secretariat or the Rajya Sabha secretariat depending on who has appointed the Chairman of that Committee.

There are 24 standing Committees as 16 departmental standing Committees in Lok Sabha and 8 departmental standing Committees in Rajya Sabha.

Functions of Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee:

- ❑ To consider the Demands for Grants of the related Ministries/Departments and report thereon. The report shall not suggest anything of the nature of cut motions;
- ❑ To examine Bills, pertaining to the related Ministries/Departments, referred to the Committee by the Chairman or the Speaker, as the case may be, and report thereon;
- ❑ To consider the annual reports of the Ministries/Departments and report thereon; and
- ❑ To consider national basic long term policy documents presented to the Houses, if referred to the Committee by the Chairman or the Speaker, as the case may be, and report thereon

Significance of Department - related Parliamentary Standing Committees

- ❑ Emphasis on long-term plans, policies guiding the working of the Executive, these Committees are providing necessary direction, guidance and inputs for broad policy formulations and in achievement of the long-term national perspective by the Executive.
- ❑ It is easier to examine a topic in depth by a committee of 30 than by an assembly of 700.
- ❑ The work put in by the total 24 DRSCs in examining the Demands for Grants of all the ministries equals 30 days of functioning of the Parliament.
- ❑ They enable input from experts and those who may be directly affected by a policy or legislation.
- ❑ Being outside direct public glare allows members to discuss issues and reach consensus without worrying about constituency or party pressures.
- ❑ Overall, secure more accountability of the executive towards the legislature.

Committees to Inquire

This Committee can be divided into three categories.

Committee on Petitions:

- ❑ This Committee examines all the petitions referred to it and also reports on specific complaints and suggests remedial measures.
- ❑ The Committee on Petitions of Lok Sabha is one of the oldest Committees of the House, which was first constituted on 20 February, 1924 by the President of the Central Legislative Assembly

Committee of Privilege:

Composition

- ❑ This Committee consists of 15 members nominated by the Speaker

Functions

- ❑ Its 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
- ❑ They examine issues relating to the violation of privilege either of the House or the members of any Committee. They also look into specific situations to analyse the violation of privilege and suggest recommendations accordingly.

Committee on Ethics:

Composition:

- ❑ The ethics Committee in Lok Sabha has 15 MPs. In Rajya Sabha this number stands at 10.

Function:

- ❑ It formulates Code of Conduct for members and suggest amendments to it from time to time.
- ❑ It also oversees moral and ethical conduct of Members.
- ❑ It examines complaints related to any unethical conduct by members of Lower House of Parliament.
- ❑ It can also initiate suo- motu investigation into matters related to unethical conduct of a member and make recommendations, as it may deem fit.

Committee to scrutinize and control

Committee on government assurances: The functions of the Committee on Government Assurances are to scrutinize the Assurances, promises, undertakings etc., given by the Ministers, from time to time on the floor of the House and to report on:

- the extent to which such Assurances, promises, undertakings etc., have been implemented; and
- where implemented, whether such implementation has taken place within the minimum time necessary for the purpose.

Committee on subordinate Legislation: This Committee scrutinizes and reports to the legislature whether the executive is utilizing its powers of making rules and laws efficiently which have been conferred to

it by the constitution and delegated by the Parliament.

Committee on Papers laid on the table: The Committee consists of 15 Members, nominated by the Speaker, Lok Sabha. The Chairperson of the Committee is appointed from amongst the Members of the Committee. The Committee shall hold office for a term not exceeding one year.

Functions

- ❑ The functions of the Committee, as per Rule 305B, shall be to examine all papers laid on the Table of the House by the Ministers and to report to the House on:
 - whether there has been compliance of the provisions of the Constitution, Act, rule or regulation under which the paper has been laid;
 - whether there has not been any unreasonable delay in laying the paper;
 - 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;
 - whether both Hindi and English versions of the paper have been laid on the Table; and
 - whether a statement explaining the reasons for not laying the Hindi version has been given and whether such reasons are satisfactory. [Rule 305B (1)]
- ❑ The Committee shall perform 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 the welfare of SC's and ST's:

Composition:

- ❑ Committee on the welfare of SC's and ST's consists of 30 members- of this 30 as many as 20 members are from Lok Sabha and the remaining 10 are from Rajya Sabha elected by the Presiding Officer every year from amongst its members.

Function:

- ❑ It considers the reports of the National Commission for SC's and National Commission for ST's.
- ❑ To examine all matters relating to the welfare of Scheduled Caste and Schedule Tribes.

Committee on Empowerment of Women:

Composition:

- ❑ Committee on the welfare of women consists of 30 members- of this 30 ,20 members are from Lok

Sabha and the remaining 10 are from Rajya Sabha elected by the Presiding Officer every year from amongst its members.

Function:

- ❑ They analyse and scrutinize the reports of the National Commission for Women.
- ❑ To examine all measures taken by the Government to secure status, dignity and equality for women in all fields.

Joint Committee on Offices of Profit:

Composition:

- ❑ This Committee consists of 15 members- of this 15, 10 members are from Lok Sabha and the remaining 5 are from Rajya Sabha elected by the Presiding Officer every year from amongst its members.

Function:

- ❑ This Parliamentary Committee examines the composition and nature of Committees and bodies, also ensures the eligibility of people in a position in these organizations.

Committees relating to the day-to-day business of the house

Business Advisory Committee:

Composition

- ❑ It consists of 15 members in Lok Sabha headed by the Speaker and 11 members in Rajya Sabha headed by the ex-officio Chairperson. Members are nominated by the Speaker or Chairman in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha respectively proportional to party strength.
- ❑ Ministers can't be members of this Committee.
- ❑ The Committee usually meets at the start of each Session and then as needed after that.
- ❑ The Committee makes its decision unanimous in character.

Functions

- ❑ To recommend the amount of time to be considered for government bills and other matters that the Speaker, in agreement with the Leader of the House, may direct to be referred to the Committee.
- ❑ The Committee may also recommend to the Government that specific topic be brought forward for consideration in the House and that time be set aside for such discussions.
- ❑ The Business Advisory Committee was first constituted in 1952.

Committee on Private Members' Bills and Resolutions:

Composition

- ❑ This Committee consists of 15 members of Lok Sabha and the Deputy Speaker is its Chairman when nominated as a member of the Committee.
- ❑ The Committee is nominated by the Speaker.

Functions

- ❑ 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 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 one year.

Rules Committee:

Composition

- ❑ The Committee consists of 15 members including the Chairman. The Speaker is the ex-officio Chairman. The Speaker nominates members to the Committee. If the Deputy Speaker is not a member of the Committee, he is invited to all the sittings of the Committee.
- Tenure
- ❑ No fixed term of Office is laid down for the Committee. It continues in Office till it is reconstituted by the Speaker.

Functions

- ❑ To consider matters of procedure and conduct of business in the Lok Sabha and recommend any amendments or additions to the Rules as may be deemed necessary.
 - ❑ It looks after the proper conduct of the business in the House and ensures that Rules of Procedure are upheld. It also makes necessary amendments wherever necessary.
- Committee on the absence of members:

Composition:

- ❑ Special Committee of Lok Sabha and consists of 15 members. No such Committee in Rajya Sabha and all such matters are dealt by the House itself.

Function:

- ❑ It examines the leave application of the members of the Houses.
- ❑ Examines the cases of members who have been absent for a period of 60 days or more without permission.

Service Committees or Housekeeping Committees

These Committees are concerned with the Provision of Facilities and Services to the members.

General Purposes Committee:**Composition**

- ❑ The Committee shall consist of the Chairman, the Deputy Chairman, Members of the Panel of Vice-Chairmen, Chairmen of all Standing Parliamentary Committees of Rajya Sabha, Leaders of recognised Parties and Groups in Rajya Sabha and such other Members as may be nominated by the Chairman. The Chairman shall be the ex-officio Chairman of the Committee.
- ❑ The Committee nominated under Sub-rule(I) shall hold office until a new Committee is nominated.
- ❑ Casual vacancies in the Committee shall be filled by the Chairman.

Function

- ❑ The functions of the Committee are to work towards the affairs, and matters that are referred from time to time by the Speaker of the House.
- ❑ This Committee takes up issues that do not fall under the purview of any other Parliamentary Committee.

House Committee:**Composition:**

- ❑ Both houses have their respective House Committees. It consists of 12 members.

Function:

- ❑ The facilities that are given to the members of the House, for instance, medical aid, food, etc. are looked after by this Committee.

Library Committee:**Composition:**

- ❑ Consists of 9 members, of which 6 are from Lok Sabha and 3 from Rajya Sabha

Function:

- ❑ The library of the Parliament and assists the member in utilising the library services.

Joint Committee on Salaries and Allowances of Members:**Composition:**

- ❑ This Committee was constituted under the salary, Allowances and Pension of Members of Parliament Act, 1954. It consists of 15 members, of which 10 from Lok Sabha and 5 from Rajya Sabha

Function:

- ❑ This Committee looks after the salaries and allowances of the members of the House.

Ad Hoc Committee

Inquiry Committee

An Inquiry Committee is formed from time to time to look into specific incidents. For instance, the Committee on Food Management in Parliament House Complex is one such Committee to look at the revision of rates at the Parliamentary canteen. The rules of operation are mentioned in the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament.

Examples of some of the Inquiry Committees are mentioned below:

- ❑ Committee on Food Management in Parliament House Complex
- ❑ Committee on Installation of Portraits/Statues of National leaders and Parliamentarians
- ❑ Committee on Provision of Computers to Members of Lok Sabha
- ❑ Joint Committee on Security in Parliament House Complex
- ❑ Railway Convention Committee
- ❑ Committee to Inquiry into the Improper Conduct of a Member
- ❑ Joint Committee on Maintenance of Heritage Character and Development of Parliament House Complex

Advisory Committee

These Committees report on particular bills. Select or Joint Committees on bills are included in these Committees. They follow a procedure distinct from the Inquiry Committees, as the procedure to be followed by them is laid down in the Rules of Procedure and the Directions provided by the speaker/Chairman. Whenever a particular Bill is introduced in any House, the House refers it to the Select Committee to study the Bill clause by clause.

Advisory Committees are formed to report on specific bills referred to it. For instance, the Joint Committee on the Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019 is one such Advisory Committee to analyse the draft bill.

The Rules of procedure and functioning of these Committees are determined by the Speaker of Lok Sabha or chairperson of Rajya Sabha.

Other Important Features

Composition: It consists of members nominated by the Speaker and Chairman in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha respectively. The exact number of members is determined by the Speaker and Chairman.

Chairman: The Chairman of the Committee is appointed by the Speaker or Chairman among its members. The Committees submit the report to the respective ministries and disintegrate.

Consultative Committees

Formation

- ❑ These Committees are constituted by the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs.
- ❑ These are normally constituted after the new Lok Sabha is constituted.
- ❑ This implies that these Committees stand dissolved upon dissolution of every Lok Sabha and thus, are reconstituted upon constitution of each Lok Sabha.

Composition

- ❑ The guidelines regarding the composition, functions and procedures of these Committees are formulated by the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs.
- ❑ The same Ministry also makes arrangements for holding their meetings both during the session and the intersession period of Parliament.
- ❑ These consist of members of both the Houses of Parliament.
- ❑ However, 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.

Functions

- ❑ These Committees are attached to various ministries/ departments of the Central Government.
- ❑ The Minister/Minister of State in charge of the Ministry concerned acts as the Chairman of the consultative Committee of that ministry.
- ❑ These 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.
- ❑ The Consultative Committees are not Parliamentary Committees.

A Parliamentary Committee means a Committee that:

- Is appointed or elected by the House or nominated by the Speaker or Chairman.
- Works under the direction of the Speaker or Chairman.
- Presents its report to the House or to the Speaker or Chairman.
- Has a secretariat provided by the Lok Sabha or Rajya Sabha.
- Parliamentary Committees draw their authority from Article 105 (on privileges of Parliament members) and Article 118 (on Parliament's authority to make rules for regulating its procedure and conduct of business).

Parliamentary Committees are an essential component of the Indian Parliamentary system. They provide better analysis and scrutiny of important issues. These Parliamentary Committees play an important role in influencing the policies of the government and also act as an interface between the government and the people. Most importantly, it makes the executive accountable to the legislature.