



SPEAKS

Review of 17th Lok Sabha

**Compiled by
Prime Point Srinivasan
Priyadharshni Rahul**

**Prime Point Foundation
Chennai**

Dr APJ Abdul Kalam's Foreword for PreSense100

Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam
Former President of India



10, Rajaji Marg
New Delhi-110011

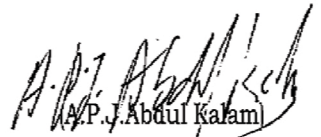
FOREWORD

I am very happy to know that the PreSense monthly ezine published by Prime Point Foundation is bringing out a book based on some of the unique articles, interviews and events published in its editions so far since from March 2006. The 100 issues of the publication have gone through an eventful journey, focusing on knowledge capture and important knowledge dissemination. I recollect my direct association with PreSense in July 2008, when I launched the cartoon character, 'Prince', created exclusively for PreSense.

I see PreSense continuing in its journey under the mentorship of Prime Point Srinivasan, maintaining its status as a must-read ezine, in the fast moving and evolving world of communication, knowledge and connectivity.

I congratulate the Editorial Team of PreSense for bringing out the 100th Edition as a Collector's Digest.

28th May 2015


(A.P.J. Abdul Kalam)



About Prime Point Foundation



PRIME POINT Foundation

Prime Point Foundation, a Non-Profit Trust and NGO was founded in December 1999 by Shri K Srinivasan (popularly known as Prime Point Srinivasan), a former Senior Banker and a Digital Journalist and Communication Professional, to promote leadership and communication skills among the youth. Very eminent persons are associated with the Foundation.

In the past 25 years, the Foundation has organised several seminars, workshops, training and interactive sessions, both offline and online, on various subjects of national interest. The Foundation manages various online discussion groups and podcasts on communication, and digital journalism.

The Foundation has started 5 initiatives viz. eMagazine PreSense, Sansad Ratna Awards, Next Gen Political Leaders, Digital Journalists Association of India and Education Loan Task Force, to create awareness in various domains. All these initiatives are managed independently by passionate experts. These initiatives are non-commercial, and focussed on youth.

About eMagazine PreSense



PreSense: The eMagazine PreSense was started in March 2006 on the suggestion of Dr APJ Abdul Kalam to promote positive journalism. As of June 2025, the Foundation has published 220 editions. Dr Abdul Kalam has written the foreword for the Digest of articles up to 100 editions. PreSense publishes the cartoon character Prince, which was launched by Dr Abdul Kalam in 2008.



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Chennai**

PreSense Speaks: Review of 17th Lok Sabha

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Introduction

Foreword From Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam For The PreSense100

Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam
Former President of India



10, Rajaji Marg
New Delhi-110011

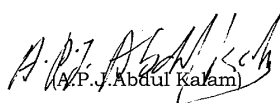
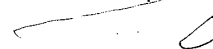
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28th May 2015


(A.P.J. Abdul Kalam)


Journey of Ezine PreSense - Milestones

Dec 1999	Launch of Prime Point Foundation, Publisher of the ezine.
Feb 2006	Launch of ezine, PreSense online by Dr Y S Rajan.
Aug 2006	Integration of Podcast with the ezine contents.
Aug 2007	Introduction of Guest Editors.
Feb 2008	Second Anniversary Edition with Dr Abdul Kalam's exclusive interview. Masthead changed.
Apr 2008	First ezine to become 'Media Partner' for a global event held at London.
July 2008	Introduction of cartoons – Cartoon Character 'Prince' launched by Dr Abdul Kalam.
Sep 2008	Change in layout, introducing photographs on the cover.
Jan 2010	Ezine's new initiative 'Education Loan Task Force' (ELTF) launched to create awareness among students and parents.
May 2010	Ezine's second initiative to honour top performing Parliamentarians, with the <i>Sansad Ratna</i> Award launched. Golden Jubilee (50 th) Edition launched.
Feb 2011	Diamond Jubilee (60 th) Edition.

A hiatus after 5 years of uninterrupted journey

Apr 2012	Ezine resumed in a new format of contents. The tag line changed from 'Communicate the Communication' to 'Spreading Positive Vibrations.'
Apr 2013	Tamil Nadu Governor launched a special edition on the Indian Parliament, coinciding with the <i>Sansad Ratna</i> Awards.

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Jun 2013	Platinum Jubilee (75 th) Edition launched by the youth at three places simultaneously, across the nation.
Jun 2015	100 th Edition - PreSense 100 released in print format.
Mar 2016	Ezine's third initiative 'Digital Journalists Association of India' (DiJAI) launched.
Jun 2016	Second edition of PreSense 100+ released in print format
Dec 2017	Ezine's fourth initiative 'Digital Security Association of India' (DiSAI) launched.
Mar 2018	Third edition of Digest PreSense130 released in print format.
Aug 2019	Fourth edition of Digest PreSense150 launched in pdf format.
May 2021	PreSense Speaks Series – First volume released on Communication (compilation of articles published earlier)
Sep 2021	Fifth edition of Digest PreSense175 in 6 volumes released.
Jul 2022	PreSense Speaks Series – Second volume released compiling the Editorials published between 2020 and 2022
Aug 2022	PreSense Speaks Series – Third volume launched – Compilation of articles on Indian freedom fighters
Aug 2023	Compilation of articles on Freedom fighters Part II launched
Aug 2024	Compilation of articles on Freedom Fighters – Third edition launched
Nov 2024	PreSense Speaks – Review of 17 th Lok Sabha released

The Journey Continues.....

PreSense Speaks: Review of 17th Lok Sabha

Editorial Team – June 2025

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K. Srinivasan
(Prime Point Srinivasan)

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Journalist, Ex The Hindu

Editor in Chief

C Badri, Former General
Manager, Canara Bank and
CVO, IOB, Chennai

Consulting Editor

R Nurullah, Senior Journalist

Editor

Priyadharshni Rahul,
Advocate, Supreme Court of
India, New Delhi

Cartoon Editor

Triambak Sharma, Editor,
Cartoon Watch, Raipur



**PRIME POINT
Foundation**

Prime Point Foundation and its Initiatives

Prime Point Foundation, a Non-Profit Trust and NGO, was founded in December 1999 by Shri K Srinivasan (popularly known as Prime Point Srinivasan), a former Senior Banker, digital Journalist, and Communication Professional, to promote leadership and communication skills among the youth. The foundation is associated with many eminent persons.

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The Foundation has formed 5 initiatives to create awareness in various domains. All these initiatives are managed independently by passionate experts. They are non-commercial and focussed on youth.

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PreSense Speaks: Review of 17th Lok Sabha

published a Digest of select articles published up to 175 editions in 8 volumes.

India Book of Records has recognised PreSense for publishing maximum number of digital only eMagazine since 2006 through voluntary efforts. .

Sansad Ratna Awards: This is a flagship initiative started in 2010 to honour top performing Parliamentarians every year, based on various performance parameters, and selected by a Jury Committee of eminent Parliamentarians. Dr Abdul Kalam himself inaugurated the first edition of the Awards event in May 2010. Till 2024, the Foundation has conducted 14 editions and presented 125 Awards. IIT Madras was the supporting Partner up to the 9th Edition. 10th Edition was held at Raj Bhavan, Tamil Nadu. 11th, 12th and 13th Editions were held at New Delhi.



India Book of Records (IBR) has recognised Sansad Ratna Awards for maximum number of Parliamentary Awards (86) given and maximum number of award events (12) by the civil society based on the performance in consecutive years.

Next Gen Political Leaders (NGPL) is an off-shoot of Sansad Ratna Awards. This is a registered NGO operating since 2018. NGPL has organised several workshops online and offline, for young political leaders and aspirants. Ministers, parliamentarians, legislators and retired constitutional authorities have participated and shared their views. NGPL will shortly be instituting Awards for young promising politicians.



Education Loan Task Force (ELTF) was started in 2010 to create awareness about education loans, among students and parents. More than 30,000 queries have been responded to, through email, and more than 5000 serious complaints have been taken up with the top management of the banks concerned, for redressal. Many policy issues have been taken up by Sansad Ratna Awardee MPs, in the Parliament for solution. ELTF does not facilitate loans.



Digital Journalists Association of India (DiJAI): DiJAI is an independent NGO founded in 2017 to raise public and journalist awareness of digital journalism and its implications. DiJAI conducts several online and offline workshops and seminars with panels of domain experts.



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Publisher's Note

We are delighted to present the 18th book of the *PreSense Speaks* series, a testament to our ongoing commitment to positive journalism. Since its inception in March 2006, *PreSense*—an initiative inspired by the visionary Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, former President of India—has grown into a trusted platform for thoughtful discourse. By March 2024, we celebrated 18 years of this journey, and as of November 2024, we have proudly published 213 editions.

The inaugural edition of the *PreSense Speaks* series, focusing on communication, was launched by Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal, Hon'ble MoS for Parliamentary Affairs, in May 2021. Continuing this legacy, we now bring you a compilation of articles that reflect on the functioning of the 17th Lok Sabha. As our readers know, *PreSense* has consistently covered Parliament's sessions with editorials and in-depth analyses. This edition brings together all such articles published between 2019 and 2024, offering a comprehensive review of the 16th Lok Sabha, the 17th Lok Sabha, and insights into the 18th General Elections.

This compilation wouldn't have been possible without the dedication of Priyadharshni Rahul and U. Sridhar Raj, who meticulously sourced and curated content from past editions. Their efforts deserve our heartfelt appreciation.

We are confident that this edition will serve as a valuable resource for our readers, offering informative and thought-provoking perspectives.

Warm regards,

K. Srinivasan (Prime Point Srinivasan)
Founder & Chairman, Prime Point Foundation

Review of 16th Lok Sabha

16th Lok Sabha – At a Glance

By Prime Point Srinivasa, Mg. Editor, (February 2019)



After completing the full term of five years, the 16th Lok Sabha concluded its final session on 13th February 2019. Although the media has carried out a basic analysis of the performance of the 16th Lok Sabha the following morning, so far, there has been no in-depth discussion about the performance of the Members. As the nation prepares for the 17th General Elections, it is pertinent at this juncture to analyse the performance of the 16th Lok Sabha vis-à-vis the earlier one, which was elected in 2014. PreSense attempts to bring out a quick review of the performance of the 16th Lok Sabha, in comparison to that of the 14th and 15th Lok Sabha.

Duties of Parliamentarians

- Enacting Laws
- Passing the Financial Budget
- Supervision of the Executive functions
- Representation of the issues of Constituency, State and Nation.

Tools Available in the Parliament

- Debates (Zero Hour, Rule No 377, Short duration discussion under Rule 193, calling attention motion, half an hour discussion, Financial business, debates during legislative business, private members bills, etc)
- Raising Questions
- Participation in Standing Committees

Uniqueness of 16th Lok Sabha

The 16th Lok Sabha has recorded some unique aspects during its tenure.

- Absolute majority by a single political party, after 1989;
- Online filing of notices by Members;
- Merger of Railway Budget with General Union Budget, after 91 years;
- Advancement of Budget presentation to 1st February, from 28th February;
- Passing of Budget proposals before the beginning of next financial year.

Productivity

Lok Sabha	Sittings	Actual working hours	Disruption	Productivity
14	332	1737	13%	87%
15	357	1342	39%	63%
16	331	1616	15%	85%

Data source: PRS Legislative Research / Lok Sabha site

16th Lok Sabha has shown improved productivity, compared to 15th Lok Sabha.

PreSense Speaks: Review of 17th Lok Sabha

Members Participation

Parameter	14 Lok Sabha	15 Lok Sabha	16 Lok Sabha
Debates (D)	15324	18121	21196
Debates – Average per member	31	38	44
Private Members Bills (PMB)	309	372	1116
PMB – Average per member	0.6	0.8	2.3
Questions raised (QR)	89055	143635	142158
Questions – Average per member	179	300	292
Total Tally (D+PMB+QR)	104688	162126	164470
Total tally – Average per member	210	339	338
Average Attendance	70%	76%	80%

Data source: PRS Legislative Research

- There is a marked improvement in the participation by members in Debates, Private Members Bills and Attendance.
- Debates include both initiated debates and associated debates in the 14th and 15th Lok Sabha. The 16th Lok Sabha has shown a substantial increase in Associated Debates (Initiated Debates 21196 and Associated Debates 11166). We have taken only Initiated Debates for our analysis in this article)
- Ministers do not participate in debates, raise questions or introduce PMBs. They are excluded for calculating averages throughout this article.

Legislation

Standing Committee	Lok Sabha		
	14th	15th	16th
Bills introduced (Other than Finance and Appropriation Bills)	245	228	190
Bills referred to Standing Committee	147	157	39
Bills referred to JPC	1	0	5
Bills referred to RS Select Committee after passage by LS	0	4	8
Total Bills referred to Committee	148	161	52
Percentage of Bills referred	60%	71%	27%
<i>*Above Data does not include Finance and Appropriation Bills</i>			
<i>Bills which were referred again during the subsequent Lok Sabha period have been included in the list for the same Lok Sabha period in which they were originally introduced and referred to avoid double counting.</i>			
	14th	15th	16th
Bills Introduced and Passed			
Finance and Appropriation Bills Introduced	74	63	47
Other Govt. Bills Introduced	245	228	190
Total Bills Introduced	319	291	237
Other Govt. Bills Passed	173	116	133
Finance and Appropriation Bills Passed	74	63	47
Total Bills Passed	247	179	180
Total Bills Lapsed	39	68	46

Data source: PRS Legislative Research

- 46 Bills got lapsed in 16th Lok Sabha as against 39 and 68 Bills in 14th and 15th Lok Sabha.

PreSense Speaks: Review of 17th Lok Sabha

- Fewer number of Bills (i.e. 27%) were referred to Standing Committees during the 16th Lok Sabha as against 60 and 71 percent Bills respectively, referred in the 14th and 15th Lok Sabha.

Departmentally Related Standing Committees (DRSC) – Lok Sabha – 16 DRSCs

Lok Sabha	No. of Sittings	Bills referred	Reports presented
14			627
15	1362	67	662
16	1343	17	720

Data source: Lok Sabha site

- There are 24 Departmentally Related Standing Committees in the Parliament (DRSCs). (16 relate to Lok Sabha and 8 relate to Rajya Sabha). Data for Rajya Sabha Committees is not available.
- Three important functions of DRSCs: (1) Discuss and report on policies (2) Scrutinise the budgetary proposals and (3) Scrutinise bills referred to the committees.
- During the 16th Lok Sabha, fewer number of bills were referred to DRSCs.

Performance of Members – State-wise

State	14 th Lok Sabha			15 th Lok Sabha			16 th Lok Sabha		
	No. of MPs	Total (D+PMB + QR)	Average per member	No. of MPs	Total (D+PMB + QR)	Average per member	No. of MPs	Total (D+PMB + QR)	Average per member

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									mb er
Maha rasht ra	45	146 23	325	44	222 22	50 5	4 8	289 04	60 2
Keral a	19	502 9	265	17	769 4	45 2	2 1	102 31	48 1
Tamil Nadu	29	582 6	201	38	147 13	38 7	3 8	181 68	47 8
West Beng al	39	744 9	191	43	790 5	18 4	4 6	499 6	10 9
Nati onal	49 8	104 688	210	47 8	162 128	33 9	4 8 6	164 470	33 8

Data source: PRS Legislative Research

D-debates; PMB – Private Members Bills; QR – Questions raised+

- Ministers excluded in the number of MPs.
- For 16th Lok Sabha, Initiated Debates only taken into account. Associated Debates excluded.
- Maharashtra and Kerala have consistently maintained their position as toppers amongst the States.
- Tamil Nadu has shown better participation in the 15th and 16th Lok Sabha as compared to the 14th Lok Sabha.

Performance of Members – Party-wise

Politica l Parties	14 th Lok Sabha			15 th Lok Sabha			16 th Lok Sabha		
	No . of MP s	Total (D+ PMB +	Ave rag e per	N o. of M Ps	Total (D+ PMB + QR)	Av era ge per	N o. of M	Tota l (D+ PMB +	Av er ag e pe

PreSense Speaks: Review of 17th Lok Sabha

		QR)	me m ber			me m ber	P s	QR)	r me m be r
Shiv Sena	12	5328	444	11	7793	709	17	12476	734
NCP	9	1696	188	7	2733	399	7	4271	610
BJP	131	27637	211	119	42404	356	264	74916	284
Congress (INC)	126	25085	199	177	49616	280	50	15968	319
CPI(M)	42	6554	156	16	4788	299	9	4333	481
AIADMK	-	-	-	9	4587	510	37	18106	489
DMK	10	1471	147	18	4431	246	-	-	-
CPI	10	3558	356	4	2004	501	1	451	451
AITC	1	32	32	20	1348	67	38	3597	94
National	498	104688	210	478	162128	339	486	164470	338

Data source: PRS Legislative Research

D-debates; PMB – Private Members Bills; QR – Questions raised

- Ministers excluded in the number of MPs.
- For 16th Lok Sabha, initiated debates only taken into account. Associated debates excluded.
- Shiv Sena has been the topper consistently.

PreSense Speaks: Review of 17th Lok Sabha

- CPI(M) has shown better performance under Debates.

Performance of Members – Age-wise

Age group	14 th Lok Sabha			15 th Lok Sabha			16 th Lok Sabha		
	No. of MPs	Total (D+ PMB + QR) in lakhs	Average per member	No. of MPs	Total (D+ PMB + QR) in lakhs	Average per member	No. of MPs	Total (D+ PMB + QR) in lakhs	Average per member
Less than 45	90	0.18	184	80	0.29	362	83	0.28	343
46 to 60	219	0.51	232	232	0.74	320	217	0.74	343
61 & above	183	0.36	197	209	0.59	282	243	0.62	254
National	498	1.05	210	478	1.62	339	486	1.64	338

Data source: PRS Legislative Research

D-debates; PMB – Private Members Bills; QR – Questions raised

- Ministers excluded in the number of MPs.
- For 16th Lok Sabha, Initiated Debates only taken into account. Associated Debates excluded.
- The younger members of less than 45 years of age have participated more in the 15th and 16th Lok Sabha.

(Ministers do not participate in the Debates, introduce Private Members Bills or raise Questions. They have been excluded from the analysis for this article).

Toppers

Lok Sabha	National Level toppers	
	Name of the MP	Total tally
14	Shri Anandrao Adsul	1290
	Shri S K Kharventhan	1287
15	Shri Anandrao Adsul	1304
	Shri S S Ramasubbu	1236
16	Smt. Supriya Sule	1321
	Shri Rajeev Satav	1255

Data source : PRS Legislative Research

Shri Anandrao Adsul (Shiv Sena) was the topper in the 14th and 15th Lok Sabha. He is a fifth time MP from Maharashtra. He is also the Chairman of the Sansad Ratna Awards Jury Committee, instituted by PreSense. He secured the 9th position in the 16th Lok Sabha in spite of various responsibilities shouldered by him.

Shri S K Kharventhan (Cong) and Shri S S Ramasubbu (Cong) who secured the second position in the 14th and 15th Lok Sabha, are from Tamil Nadu.

In the 16th Lok Sabha, Smt. Supriya Sule (NCP), second-time MP secured the top position, and Shri Rajeev Shankarrao Satav (Cong), first-time MP, secured the second position. Both are from Maharashtra. PreSense congratulates all the toppers and performers of the 14th, 15th and 16th Lok Sabha.

16th Lok Sabha – Sum Up:

- Various unique decisions implemented for the first time in the 16th Lok Sabha.
- The 16th Lok Sabha showed increased productivity with fewer disruptions, when compared with 15th Lok Sabha'
- Participation by Members were good compared to the earlier Lok Sabha sessions; The younger MPs showed good performance in the 16th Lok Sabha.
- Departmentally Related Standing Committees have presented more reports to the Parliament.
- Fewer number of bills were referred to Standing Committees.

PreSense Speaks: Review of 17th Lok Sabha

PreSense Lok Sabha Index

By Prime Point Srinivasa, Mg. Editor, (February 2019)



Your eMagazine PreSense, in consultation with Parliamentarians and experts, has developed an Index to evaluate the performance of Lok Sabha under 10 parameters. PreSense has also defined norms based on Parliamentary rules, practises, pasty averages and capacity. This will be known as '**PreSense Lok Sabha Index**' and this Index will be used in future too.

PreSense Speaks: Review of 17th Lok Sabha

PreSense Lok Sabha Index - Guidelines

No	Parameter	Norms to get 10 marks	Explanation
1	No. of working days (Sittings)	375 (average 75 days per annum)	Since Departmentally Related Standing Committees are in place since 1993, the sittings of the House have decreased.
2	Productivity	Zero disruption – 100% productivity	Zero disruption is the goal
3	Average Attendance	100%	100% attendance is the goal
4	Debates	16250 (3250 per annum)	There is no provision in the rules as to how many debates have to be held and how many Members have to participate in the debates. However this has been taken on the basis of practice and past records. Zero Hour (20 x 70 days = 1400); Rule 377 (20 x 60 days = 1200); Bills discussions (10 members x 40 bills = 400); Private Members Bills (5 members x 10 bills = 50)); Rule 193 (20 members x 5 = 120); Discussion on President's address (30 x 1 = 30); Budget discussion (50 members x 1 = 50) = Total 3250 per annum
5	Private Members Bills (PMB)	350 (70 per annum)	This has been taken on the basis of past records, as there is no provision in the rules as to the number of PMBs can be introduced.
6	Questions	87500 (17500 per annum)	As per rules, maximum of 250 questions can be listed for a day. If various Members ask the same question, they will be clubbed as a single question for answer. But all the members will get the credit individually. (250 x 70 days = 17500 per annum)
7	Government bills passed	200 (40 per annum)	This has been taken on the basis of past records, as there is no provision in the rules as to the number of bills can be introduced.
8	Lapsed bills	Zero	If the bills introduced in Lok Sabha, are kept pending in the Rajya Sabha, after being adopted in Lok Sabha, the bills lapse automatically after the dissolution of the current Lok Sabha. Ideally, bills which are passed by Lok Sabha should be passed by Rajya Sabha as well.
9	Departmentally Related Standing Committees - Reports	800 (10 reports per committee per annum – 16 committees)	DRSC system was introduced in 1993 and there is no general rule as to the number of reports to be presented by a committee. However, taking into account recent introduction of committee system, average record has been taken.
10	Percentage of bills referred to committees	100%	Ideally, all the bills introduced in Lok Sabha are to be referred to Departmentally Related Standing Committees for scrutiny and suggestion.

PreSense Speaks: Review of 17th Lok Sabha

Using this Index, PreSense analysed the performance of 14th, 15th and 16th Lok Sabha on the 10 parameters. Based on the analysis, PreSense has observed as follows for the

PreSense Lok Sabha Index

No	Parameter	14th Lok Sabha		15th Lok Sabha		16th Lok Sabha	
		Achievement	Marks	Achievement	Marks	Achievement	Marks
1	No. of working days (Sittings)	332	8.85	357	9.52	331	8.82
2	Productivity	87	8.70	63	6.30	85	8.50
3	Average Attendance	70	7.00	76	7.60	80	8.00
4	Debates	15324	9.30	18121	10.00	21196	10.00
5	Private Members Bills	309	8.82	372	10.00	1116	10.00
6	Questions	89055	10.00	143635	10.00	142156	10.00
7	Government bills passed	173	8.65	110	5.80	133	6.65
8	Lapsed bills	39	6.10	68	3.20	46	5.40
9	Departmentally Related Standing Committees (DRSC)- Reports	627	7.83	662	8.27	720	9.0
10	Percentage of bills referred to committees	60	6.00	71	7.10	27	2.70
Total Score			81.25		77.79		79.07

Data source: Lok Sabha Secretariat / PRS Legislative Research

performance of 16th Lok Sabha.

- Participation by Members in Debates, Private Members Bills and Questions are quite satisfactory.
- Reports of the Departmentally Related Standing Committees are more than earlier sessions;
- Productivity is good compared to 15th Lok Sabha, with less disruption.
- Lapsed bills in 16th Lok Sabha are more compared to 14th Lok Sabha but less than in 15th Lok Sabha.
- Fewer number of bills were referred to DRSC for scrutiny.

Review of 17th Lok Sabha

Let's Show Our Finger for the Right Reason – Let's Vote!

By Susan Koshy, Editor in Chief (March 2019)

April and May 2019 are going to be a couple of important months to decide who will take charge of governing our country for the next five years (hopefully). The elections to the 17th Lok Sabha will be held all over India in 7 phases from April 11th till May 19th. Yes, this means the respective constituencies which will have the polls, will get a holiday to enable the voters to reach the polling booths and exercise their franchise. Over half of our population being youth, and a large number of new voters in the fray, the young people with their voices and spirit need to be part of the responsible group that will translate its opinions, criticism and cynicism into votes in the ballot boxes.



We come across daily news of people who raise their voices on debate platforms, through writ petitions, in the various courts, and across the streets, in vocal and behavioural assertion, to reiterate and claim their legitimate rights as citizens. The right to vote is a fundamental privilege under the Constitution of India. We need to exercise that right as our fundamental responsibility, by casting our vote for our next candidate, after informed consideration about those who are standing to be elected.

An ancient folktale tells about a king who wanted to teach his kingdom of lethargic and lacklustre citizens, an important moral lesson. Therefore, one day, he asked his people to contribute a cup of milk per family, pouring it into a covered vessel laid out in a public place, for distribution later on, to

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beggars lying outside the wall of the capital city. At the end of the day, in the presence of his people, the king commanded the vessel to be opened. To everyone's shock and dismay, the 'milk' was so diluted that it looked like whey rather than milk. Apparently, most of the household families thought their one cup of water into the large collection of milk, did not matter and would go unnoticed. That was when they realised that the moral responsibility and contribution of each and every household member, mattered. Similarly, every vote that is cast and not cast, counts for our country.

Irrespective of what the result will be – whether in favour or otherwise, we need to get out to the polling booth and participate, using the ballot. As the ancient scriptures wisely advise, let us be focussed on what we need to do, irrespective of the outcome, which will depend on the sway of the majority of the votes cast. The outcome does not diminish the importance of our personal responsibility to exercise our franchise and be part of a vibrant electorate and responsible partakers in our country's future in governance and development.

So, let us awaken our spirit of responsibility. Let us arise and go for the ballot in the polling booth, even if it means waiting in long-winding queues and travelling long distances, and spending much of the day to accomplish this duty. That is why they give us a holiday from regular duties – to fulfil this fundamental duty.

Come, let's vote! Let's hold our finger up for the right reason!

Is Social Media the 'Game Changer' For Indian General Elections 2019?

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Managing Editor (March 2019)

Indians experienced the impact of the social media in elections' campaigning for the first time in 2014. Many technology tools were used then. The voters who were used to the traditional style, experienced a different kind of campaigning which was run through internet tools. The then BJP party candidate and Prime Minister-designate, Narendra Modi used these tools effectively. In 2016, the social media was utilised in full swing during the US Presidential Elections.



Growth of Social Media

Internet tools are used in elections' campaigning across the world since 2012. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and WhatsApp are mainly used in India for political communications. The penetration of the mobile phones in India over the past five years, and the availability of internet data at very low cost, has increased its use in political communication and in a highly competitive manner by political parties.

Between 2014 and 2019, mobile subscribers have gone up by 32% and internet subscribers have gone up by nearly 12 times. The entry of Jio as service provider has revolutionised data usage by smartphone users.

Category	No. of Mobiles in millions		Tele-density for Mobiles in %	
	Jan 2014	Jan 2019	Jan 2014	Jan 2019
Urban	529	654	139	157
Rural	364	528	42	59
Total	893	1182	72	90
Internet	42	522		

Source: TRAI website

Social media users have gone up from 125 million in 2014 to 360 million in 2019, with a three-fold increase. This has created more challenges for political parties. The social media remains both a boon and a bane for the political parties.

“The early movers in the social media have gained a lot. Their early gain in the social media is still there but it is fast eroding with others playing quick catch-up, especially in the rural constituencies. Newer tools and micro segmentation analytics that can precisely predict user clusters/user behaviour, using AI (Artificial Intelligence) and Deep Learning technologies are now being used”, says Srinivasan Venkatraghavan, social media data expert.

Political Parties in Social Media

Currently, all political parties at the national and regional levels, are using social media tools extensively for their political communication. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has more followings in the social media than frontline Opposition leader, Rahul Gandhi. Interestingly, during March 2019, Rahul Gandhi’s tweets were more re-tweeted than those of Narendra Modi.

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On 27th March 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the achievement of DRDO scientists in 'Mission Shakti'. Both Narendra

Modi and Rahul Gandhi tweeted on this issue. Narendra Modi's tweet had more re-tweets than that of Rahul Gandhi.

These social media engagements are also taken up by mainline media like the television and the print media. Therefore, the views from the social media are discussed outside the social media too.



Almost all the parties are using WhatsApp groups to communicate their messages and instructions to their last mile workers. They also use WhatsApp groups to transmit their messages to potential voters.

According to the Election Commission data, 25 million new voters were added in 2014 and 45 million in 2019. The total number of voters in India is around 900 million. The new voters, particularly from the younger age group, should not be taken for granted.

Traditional and Social Media Campaigns

Two questions emerge while considering the type of campaigning to use to reach potential voters:

- whether the social media communication could influence voters to vote in favour of the candidates, and

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- whether the young voters who spend more time on social media, would actually go to the polling booths to cast their votes, since the campaigning style itself has changed over the past five years, due to the emergence of the social media.

Interestingly, during the 2014 and 2016 elections, Jayalalitha in Tamil Nadu did not bother about the social media, to the extent that even the party's website was not updated. She resorted to traditional campaigning, by personally reaching out to the people. Even though the other parties used the social media extensively for their campaigning, Jayalalitha and her party swept the polls. According to Bhanu Gomes, a political analyst, the social media does not add much to the existing charisma of mass leaders. The social media is only complementary for them.

Opinions are divided when assessing whether young voters would go to polling booths for voting on election day. According to many party workers who work at the ground level, only very few of the youngsters in the past who had shared their strong views on social media platforms, had actually gone to the polling booths to vote. With the Election Commission currently on an aggressive campaign mode for 100% polling, it is expected that many more youngsters will go to the polling booths on the election day to cast their votes.

It is the opinion of almost everyone who was asked, that the social media would have some impact in influencing potential voters. When the engagements of the social media are picked up by the mainline media, they assume greater significance. Those topics are picked up for discussion and debate by the mainline media, and are also discussed by the people.

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“The uneducated voter may not be influenced by the social media, as he goes by various other parameters to vote for a candidate”, says Ranganathan, digital media consultant.

According to C H Sekhar, Ex-MLA (Member of Legislative Assembly), who

contested the elections three times before, there is an increase in the impact of the social media in influencing the voters. “In my view, about 10-15% of the voters can be influenced by the social media. There are fence sitters in every constituency. They may not be unduly influenced by a single message. They will compare and analyse fully before voting. However, the social media will also help them in taking a decision. The trending in the social media about a week before the polling date, can influence greatly”, he added.

Dr Y S Rajan, eminent scientist and co-author of the book, *India 2020* with Dr Abdul Kalam, says that the middle-class and the lower middle-class people take the elections seriously. The social media reflects the mood of the middle-class. The people of the upper middle class do not take the elections seriously. It is doubtful how many of them go to polling booths. Information not carried by mainline media, is usually circulated in the social media.

Many political leaders agree that the campaign model has changed. K T Raghavan, a senior leader of a national party agrees that political parties have to depend on social media to reach out to their party workers and voters, due to the restrictions imposed on wall posters and street meetings. He agrees that the penetration of the social media is more than what it was in 2014, and that political parties do face the challenge of converting this into votes.

Social Media				
Twitter - followers			46.6 M	9.1 M
Facebook - followers			45.0 M	2.0 M
Instagram - followers			19.6 M	0.6 M
Twitter - Average retweets *			5.8 K	9.0 K
			* Average for the last 25 tweets in Mar 2019	

Generally, the voters decide their votes, based on the political party rather than the candidate. Around 10-15% of the fence sitters may vote according to their last-minute perception, influenced either by the party or the candidate. These would be the deciding votes. Everybody agrees that the social media can influence this segment of fence sitters to take their decision.

Challenges

Even though the social media helps political parties to run their campaigns to reach their target audience, it also poses great challenges to the parties.

“Innumerable fake news generating agencies have come up. They spread YouTube videos out of context. Fake news, misinformation, disinformation and malinformation (malicious information) are already playing a major role in communication, in the run-up to this year’s elections. Emotional messages are transmitted. Even rural people view WhatsApp messages, which are transmitted in the local languages”, says C J Singh, Strategic Communication Consultant from Chandigarh.

Many political workers and supporters have started circulating fake news and memes to malign their opponents, without realising that they could boomerang on them too. WhatsApp groups are flooded with fake news. They run the risk of influencing the people to take decisions, based on misinformation or incorrect messages received by them.

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In the recent years, memes have become popular in the social media. Meme creators use text, image and video to convey political messages in a humorous way.

“Entertainment-oriented humorous memes in regional languages are used by political workers to attack their rivals. People enjoy memes. Memes can create crisis situations for even senior leaders”, says Sridhar Raj, President of Next Gen Political Leaders Forum (NGPL).

It is also reported that some foreign countries are interfering in the election campaigning, using the social media to create confusion in India during its run-up for elections. On 1st March 2019, some opposition parties at Chennai campaigned against



Narendra Modi with a global trending of *#GoBackModi*. According to Ranganathan, social media trend analyst, nearly 58% of the tweets originated in Pakistan and 6% in UK, much to the shock of the opposition parties, which had initiated this

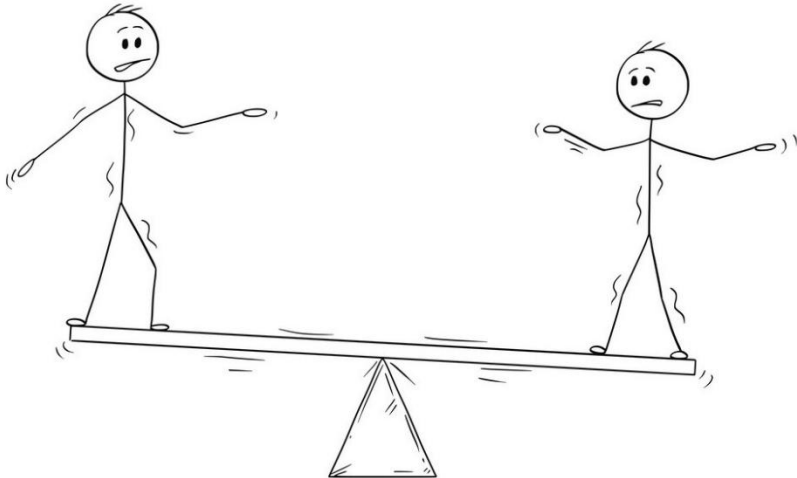
trending. Strangely, Chennai which started the campaign had only 4%. According to Ranganathan, such trending might not impact much as they are short-lived. However, when the trending is carried through the mainline media, it reaches a larger section of the people.

Wrap Up

According to many experts, General Elections 2019 can show around a 5% swing in the voting pattern, due to social media. Every 1% swing makes a difference for the candidates. As the social media does not have any regulator at present, fake news will continue to pose greater challenges to the political parties and its candidates. Even though the Election Commission is taking active steps to regulate social media advertising, it would be difficult to totally eradicate/prevent fake news, misinformation, disinformation and malinformation. This throws more responsibility on the citizens and social media users. Every citizen should ensure that wrong information is not circulated in the social media, which can destroy the credibility of the genuine candidates. Mainline media should take efforts to create awareness among the people for responsible use of the social media, instead of looking for sensational news.

Impact of a Hung Parliament

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Managing Editor (April 2019)



The entire nation is in the midst of the General Elections to elect the 17th Lok Sabha (Parliament). Two major alliances – one under the leadership of BJP and the other under the leadership of Congress are fighting in the elections to get the mandate of the people to form the Government. In addition, there are many regional and smaller parties in the fray. Several pollsters have published opinion polls with different predictions of the results. Out of 23 surveys by leading organizations/media, 11 have predicted a 'Hung Parliament'. India has already experienced the impact of such Hung Parliaments in the previous decades.

Formation of the Government

After the General Elections, the new Government is formed. The President of India invites the person who in his opinion

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commands the confidence of the majority of the House to be the Prime Minister and form his Government. Although the Indian Constitution does not specify about political parties, the President invites the Leader of the Party or the Pre-Poll Alliance who has secured the majority in the House.

We have 543 seats in the Lok Sabha. The person who commands the confidence of 272 members can become the Prime Minister. This person can be the leader of a single party or an alliance. If there is no majority to any political party or pre-poll alliance, it could lead to a hung parliament, confusion and instability. This will affect the governance and economy of the country.

Previous Governments

1. The 9th Lok Sabha was formed in 1989. The Government formed by V.P.Singh without a majority fell in 11 months. The Chandrasekar Government formed thereafter without a majority again fell in 6 months. The Lok Sabha was dissolved soon after. During this period, the Indian economy suffered heavily. India had to pledge its gold reserve and get a loan from England.
2. The 10th Lok Sabha was formed in 1991. The Congress Party formed the Government under the Prime Ministership of P.V.Narasimha Rao. Although there was a slight shortfall in majority, Narasimha Rao provided a stable Government for five years. During his term, India opened up its economy. The economic crisis was resolved.
3. The 11th Lok Sabha was formed in 1996. None of the political parties could obtain majority. As the single largest party, BJP party formed the Government under the leadership of A.B.Vajpayee. This Government survived for just 13 days. Subsequently, Deve Gowda and I.K. Gujral formed the Government one after another, without a majority. All these Governments could survive for just 18 months as none of them could provide a stable

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Government. The Lok Sabha had to be dissolved. There was political confusion and chaos due to petty politics played by power-hungry leaders of small parties, leading to a collapse of the Indian economy.

4. The 12th Lok Sabha was formed in 1998. This time too, none of the parties could secure a majority. BJP, with 182 members formed the Government with the support of some smaller parties. This Government too survived for just 13 months. The Parliament was dissolved after Vajpayee lost the Vote of Confidence by a single vote.
5. The 13th Lok Sabha was formed in 1999. The BJP-led NDA party secured 270 seats. The NDA Government was formed with Vajpayee as Prime Minister. Vajpayee provided a stable Government for the next 5 years and the Indian economy too began to flourish.
6. In the 14th Lok Sabha formed in 2004, the Congress secured 142 seats and BJP secured 130 seats. In 2009, the Congress secured 222 seats and BJP secured 112 seats in the 15th Lok Sabha. Congress formed the UPA Government in both 2004 and 2009 with the support of alliance parties, with Dr Manmohan Singh as Prime Minister. He provided a stable Government for full terms. Although the Government was stable, due to some 'arm-twisting' by some of the alliance parties, there emerged several allegations of scam during this period.
7. The 16th Lok Sabha were formed in 2014 with the BJP securing a majority on its own. They formed the NDA Government along with alliance parties, with Narendra Modi as Prime Minister. The Governments was stable and the economy continued to improve.

From the above, one can observe that whenever a 'hung Parliament' occurred, i.e. without a majority to any party or alliance, political chaos and confusion happened, leading to economic disaster. The nation has seen how the smaller supporting parties took advantage of this situation, leading to scams and corruption.

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Though there are several recognised and registered political parties in the country, presently only BJP and Congress are competent and experienced to govern this large country with a stable government. Our past experiences of smaller parties heading the Government have led to disaster and chaos.

If the mainline political party or pre-poll alliance does not get a majority, and if the smaller parties and independents are elected to the 17th Lok Sabha in large numbers, it could lead to 'horse trading' to woo those members to form a government by majority. The Government might then have to yield to their unreasonable and selfish demands periodically at the cost of the nation. India has seen such situations earlier.

Let us hope and pray that India does not face another 'Hung Parliament' in the ongoing General Elections.

An Overview in the Midst of the 17th General Elections

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Managing Editor (April 2019)



India, the world's largest democracy is now in the midst of the General Elections to elect 543 members to the 17th Lok Sabha session. This is the world's biggest election event, with 900 million eligible voters to participate, of which 15 million voters are in the age group of 18-19 years. The election is being held in 7 phases commencing on 11th April 2019 and going upto 19th May 2019, spread over 38 days. The results will be declared on 23rd May 2019.

Election Commission of India

The Election Commission of India (ECI), an independent body constituted under Article 324 of the Indian Constitution ensures that the General Elections are conducted in a free and fair manner. ECI was formed on 25th January 1950 and till date, 23 Chief Election Commissioners have supervised elections in India. In over seven decades of independent India, the Commission conducted 16 elections for the Lok Sabha and

over 360 elections for the Legislative Assemblies of Indian states.

Election Process – World's Biggest Exercise

It is a mammoth exercise to manage such a single event anywhere in the world! Voters in all the 543 constituencies will be voting through Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) in 10.35 lakh polling stations. For the first time in India, the Election Commission has introduced the Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) with the EVMs, so that the voters can see and ensure that the EVM has correctly registered their selection of the candidate with the pressing of the button on the EVM. Around 39.6 lakh EVMs and 17.4 lakh VVPAT machines are being used in this election. These EVMs are manufactured by the Government-owned Bharat Electronics Ltd and Electronic Corporation of India. These EVMs are kept secured like currency notes by ECI even during all times.

Before a voter casts his/her vote, the officials will apply a purple indelible ink on the left index finger. This ink is manufactured by the Government-owned Mysore Paints and Varnishes Limited, Karnataka. ECI has purchased 26 lakh bottles of indelible ink for use in this 17th General Elections. In 2014, 21.5 lakh bottles were used.

Interestingly, the Election Commission has only around 800 employees in all its offices. In order to manage this huge election exercise, around 12 million Government employees, including police and para military forces, are borrowed from the State and Central Governments. The Election Commission begins their planning 12 months in advance for the General Elections and the Government employees are trained systematically on how to conduct the elections. The employees who are deputed on election duty will be under the supervision of ECI. Once the election process has started,

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even the courts cannot intervene in the decisions of ECI until the entire exercise of elections is completed.

Over 120 trains with more than 3,000 coaches, 200,000 buses and cars are used for transporting people and election-related material across the country. The Election Commission hires airplanes, helicopters, boats, tractors, motorcycles, bullock carts, mules, elephants and camels too for transportation.

The Commission appoints more than 2,000 election observers, who travel across various constituencies to ensure that the elections are transparent, free and fair. They are assisted by about 140,000 micro-observers, each assigned to monitor one polling station. The Commission also deploys about 75,000 videographers and an equal number of photographers to record any wrongdoing at the polling booths during voting.

Till 29th April 2019, four phases of the Elections out of seven, and polling in 373 out of 543 (69%) Lok Sabha constituencies have been completed in India.

Phase	Date	Eligible Voters in Millions	No. of Constituencies	Voting %
First	April 11, 2019	142	91	69.5
Second	April 18, 2019	158	95	69.4
Third	April 23, 2019	176	116	65.7

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Fourth	April 29, 2019	128	71	63.2
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Source: Election Commission

After the completion of the election in all seven phases, the counting of votes will begin at 8 a.m. in nearly 4000 counting centres transparently in the presence of the candidates and the media. In all probability, the results will be declared by the same evening.

Political Parties in the Fray

The elections are fought mainly between two key national party alliances, viz. National Democratic front (NDA) led by BJP and United Progressive Alliance (UPA) led by Congress. Some regional parties like Telugu Desam, Bahujan Samaj Party, Samajwadi Party, Trinamool Congress, Biju Janata Dal are also in the fray without joining any alliance.

According to media reports, BJP has fielded around 425 candidates and Congress has also fielded more than 400 candidates on their own. More than 8000 candidates, including independents are in fray.

Interestingly, India's first General Elections was held between 25th October 1951 and 21st February 1952. During the first General Elections, the Lok Sabha had 401 constituencies with 489 seats as some constituencies had 2 or 3 seats. 173 million voters were eligible to vote then (as against the current 900 million). 1874 candidates were in fray. The voter turnout was 44.9%.

Campaigning

The main fight to capture power is between the ruling NDA and the opposition UPA. Both BJP and Congress have released their

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respective manifestoes. Some regional parties are also contesting in their respective states without any alliances.

The BJP campaign has been focussing on the various welfare schemes like *Swachh Bharat*, *Ayushman Bharat Yojana*, *Ujwala*, *Mudra Loans*, *Make in India*, etc. and their accomplishments. It has also been highlighting the GDP growth. It propagates that national security tops its agenda.

The Congress, focussing on the continued poverty in the country, has promised Rs.72,000 per annum per family to 20% of the population below the poverty line and to write off agricultural loans. The Congress campaign has also been highlighting the inconvenience caused to the public by the current government's demonetisation and GST moves, the problems faced by the agriculturists, and the growing unemployment under the current regime.

Challenges

Although the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) of ECI is in force from the date of the announcement of the poll schedule, there have been reports of violation by political parties. Till date, 445 violations have been brought to the notice of ECI for action.

The Election Commission permits an expenditure of Rs.50 to 70 lakhs to a single candidate, depending on the constituency. Many political parties indulge in wooing voters with cash and kind. Although the Election Commission is taking all efforts to eliminate this kind of violation of MCC, political parties find innovative ways to circumvent the restriction. Media reports state that so far, ECI has seized Rs.3166 crore worth of cash and goods, which were kept for distribution to voters. This includes cash to the extent of Rs.750 crores. ECI cancelled the elections in the Vellore constituency, (Tamil Nadu State) after seizure of heavy cash from the locations allegedly connected with a senior political leader. Tamil Nadu topped the list with

seizure of Rs.935 crores of cash and goods. In the course of the 2014 elections, Rs.1200 crores was seized. But in 2019, within the four phases, the seizure has gone up by 250%.

The campaign speeches by even senior political leaders have been below par, and they consisted mainly of false allegations and fake information, which have become common topics in the public meetings as well as the social media.

Even though recognised institutions like IIT and the Supreme Court have confirmed the credibility of the Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), many of the political parties continue to campaign against the credibility of the EVMs; but they have not been able to substantiate the reason for their reservations, with evidence. We find from past experience that these politicians make these allegations so that in case they lose the elections, they could attribute the negative result to faulty EVMs. They are silent if they win the elections. Till date, ECI has not received any complaint against VVPAT machines from any voter, thus confirming the credibility of EVMs.

At the end of four phases of voting, out of 604 million eligible voters, only around 65% have cast votes. ECI has been campaigning for 100% polling since the impact of the absent 35% voters is critical. The citizens must realise that the elections and the voting exercise is very serious business. They lose the right to complain and blame the Government and the system if they themselves fail in their duty to participate in the polling.

Opinion Poll

Opinion polls are not permitted after the start of the polling exercise. Exit poll results too are not allowed to be published till the last polling is complete. 23 organisations/media houses published their opinion polls before the start of the elections. Of these, 11 surveys have predicted a 'hung parliament'.

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(Please refer to the Editorial on page 4 for the impact of a 'hung parliament' in the governance of a country).

In Summing Up

The Election Commission of India since its inception has maintained the highest credibility, braving all challenges. Developed countries like USA and UK have invited our Election Commissioners in order to understand the process as conducted in India. The entire election process is conducted in a transparent manner to the candidates, the media and the public. It should be the pride of every Indian voter to belong to the world's largest democracy with 900 million eligible voters to elect their Government. Every political party and every Indian voter have a great responsibility in making the Indian democracy a vibrant one.

Cabinet of Modi 2.0 Generates Expectations and Hope

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Managing Editor and Susan Koshy, Editor in Chief (May 2019)



The Sworn-in Cabinet of Modi 2.0 Government

After a massive historic victory, Narendra Modi was sworn in as Prime Minister of India for a second term on 30th May 2019 by the President of India. Besides the Prime Minister, 24 Cabinet Ministers, 9 Ministers of State (Independent Charge) and 24 Ministers of State took the oath. While many of the members of the previous cabinet were dropped, new faces have been inducted. A quick glance at the list of ministers inducted indicates that Prime Minister Modi has done a balancing act politically by accommodating members of different castes and states, who had supported him during this election to gain the massive mandate.

Amit Shah, a well-known task master has been assigned the Home Ministry. It is generally believed that he would be the

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right person to tackle terrorism, internal safety and sensitive internal issues such as that of Kashmir. Jayshankar, a career diplomat known for his rich experience and knowledge about USA and China, has been inducted as a Cabinet Minister and entrusted with the External Affairs Ministry. This is seen as a good initiative particularly when India is being affected economically by the US-China trade war.

A new Ministry named '*Jal Sakthi*' will handle all water-related issues in the country, which has seen perennial challenges yet to be resolved. Even the rural development portfolio too has been appropriately clubbed and put under one Minister.

Even though we may not get into the merits and demerits of the allocation of portfolios, we strongly believe that the new cabinet has generated great expectations. As being elaborated in the Cover Story, the Indian voters have given a decisive mandate for a second term to Modi with a single-party majority, notwithstanding the deficiencies of the earlier regime. The current Cabinet should address the problems and pending issues of the people of India, and take the country forward.

It may not be out of place to say that Modi was first given the mandate to form the Central Government in 2014 by the people for two main reasons –

- 1) frustration over the repeated allegations of corruption in then ruling government and the unproductive blackmailing tactics of the coalition parties that supported the pre-2014 Government to stay in power (many voted against the incumbent in 2014 for this same reason), and
- 2) an open mind to give the Modi team a fair opportunity to prove his promised mandate.

"The taste of the pudding is in the eating". The success of Modi's governance seemed emphatically endorsed with the

more decisive vote back to power this time. However, it would be deceptive to think so. The country has gotten into a poignant virtual division by religion, caste, and creed, incited and fanned by malicious and mischievous minuscule groups from across political parties. There was unchecked misuse of power locally, and there were undeserved comments that ignited negative emotions and mob violence, affecting the common people. Most of the people of India want only good governance and amenities they deserve as citizens of India for the taxes they pay and the contribution they make for their country.

During its earlier five-year regime, the Government had initiated some wholesome welfare schemes which unfortunately failed in implementation. Thus, these highly publicised plans remain just name tags with no achievement to back their success, and without reaching its rightful beneficiaries. To this extent, the government has failed its people miserably as *"a job half-done is as good as none"*.

What the people of India are expecting and hoping from Modi 2.0 is emphatic and effective governance that is inclusive of all people, irrespective of caste or religion, region or state, and also reaching the rightful amenities and facilities to its people in the urban, suburban, rural and village regions. They also expect effective action against terror, mischief and indiscipline, whether they come from across the borders, within the borders, within the society or within political parties. Every appointed or self-claimed spokesperson must remember that sound bites are taken from them not for their personal capacities but for the rank, portfolio or party they represent. Anyone not heeding this with responsibility must be taken to task sternly because their irresponsibility is adversely affecting the safety and security of our country and our people. And of course, the government needs to clean up the system of its corruption so that the common man need not worry about how much he needs to have in his pocket to get his work done and

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also whom and how to grease to get his legitimate work done by the bureaucracy. This is a very big challenge as corruption has become so ingrained that it is viewed by some tourists as part of the Indian culture!

So, gear up Team Modi 2.0. 'We, the people' have much to expect from you, and for this reason, you have challenges to meet to achieve the vision of a strong India that is inclusive of ALL its people whose only identity should be 'We, the people of India', nothing more, nothing less. We wish you success in this mission as you move into the next five-year term.

Chowkidar Crowned as King

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Managing Editor (May 2019)

Historic Victory

The 2019 General Elections (*Lok Sabha*) has given a massive mandate to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to continue his leadership of the BJP-led NDA Government for another five years. The landslide victory by this political combine has not only stunned political parties within the country but the entire world. BJP increased its vote share and seats over its first term verdict of 2014. The Indian National Congress (INC) increased the number of its seats marginally in the Lower House, but with a reduced vote share, falling short again, for the second time, of the required minimum number (one tenth of the strength of the House of 543 seats) to qualify for the official position of Opposition Party in the House.

Party	2014		2019	
	Seats	Vote share %	Seats	Vote Share %
BJP	282	31.3	303	37.5
INC	44	19.5	52	18.3
NDA	336	38.5	353	45.0
UPA	60	23.1	91	26.0

In 2019, BJP has secured 229 million votes, as against 171 million votes in 2014. INC secured 119 million votes in 2019 as against 107 million votes in 2014. In 2019, BJP has added more than 50 million votes to its tally, with an additional 6% increase in its vote share.

India is the world's largest democracy with more than 607 million registered voters exercising their franchise personally to elect their Government. In 2019, as against 910 million eligible electors (834 million in 2014), 66.7% voters (66.4%

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in 2014) exercised their franchise. In 2019, 607 million (554 million in 2014) voters went to the polling booths to cast their votes. For the first time, Indian voters were able to see the symbols of the political parties which they voted for, through VVPAT (Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail) machines. Although the opposition parties expressed concerns about the alleged manipulation of the EVMs (Electronic Voting Machines), not a single complaint from any voter was registered about the wrong display in the VVPAT machines. Besides, during the counting, more than 20,000 VVPAT machines were physically tallied with the corresponding EVM Machines and found to be accurate.

Why This Massive Mandate?

After the declaration of the polling results, PreSense conducted a quick online survey to understand the people's perception, and contacted several voters pan-India. The general perception was in favour of a strong leader to lead the nation.

Not Projecting a PM Candidate by Opposition: Rahul Gandhi of INC could not bring all the Opposition Parties together under a single umbrella of the UPA (United Progressive Alliance) banner. More than 12 regional parties contested in the elections, each with its own Prime Ministerial ambition. While NDA projected Modi as their PM, neither the Congress nor any of the other Opposition Parties could project a single leader. This worked to the advantage of NDA as people could not see an alternative leader to Modi, with the TINA factor operating (There Is No Alternative).

Wrong Campaign by Opposition: Although Modi's regime was stacked with economic deficiencies like unemployment, farmers' issues, the impact of demonetization and GST, and slow growth of the manufacturing sector, the Opposition Parties did not campaign strongly on these issues. Instead, they ridiculed the Pulwama attack on our security forces as

well as the Balakote bombings of the suspected terrorist camps in the valley by our security forces. This infuriated large section of the common people to whom nationalism and patriotism are primary. This *faux pas* was cleverly leveraged by BJP in its election campaign, projecting national security and citizen security over all other issues in its election campaign. Besides, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi focussed on '*Chowkidar ChorHai*' slogan, leading even to his tendering an unconditional apology before the Supreme Court in this context at the height of his election campaigning. The Rafale aircraft deal, signed by the Prime Minister himself in 2016 in Paris was raked up by the Congress for alleged corruption issues and of favoring a particular big industrial house, but it did not cut much ice with the voters for want of evidence.



Political experts claim that the Congress-led Opposition and *Mahagatbandhan's* (Grand Coalition) ambition of multiple choices for the Prime Ministerial candidate created confusion and apprehension amongst the people, thereby feeling that a strong leader was the 'need of the hour'. There was no better alternative to Modi as the proven Prime Minister. The people

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felt strongly that an 'undecided crowd of parties' was not an alternative.

Past Experiences: Political analysts quote the example of the 1971 and the 1980 General Elections with similar phenomena. In 1971, when Indira Gandhi declared the '*Garibi Hatao*' (Remove Poverty) slogan, the Opposition Parties had a single agenda of '*Indira Hatao*' (Remove Indira). Indira Gandhi went on to win 352 seats in the elections. History seemed to repeat itself, as in the 2019 elections, even as Modi declared a resurgent 'New India' slogan, the Opposition Parties had a single agenda of '*Modi Hatao*' (Remove Modi).

In 1977, after the emergency, Indira Gandhi was defeated by the Janata Party, riding on the people's anger against the emergency and its alleged atrocities. However, within two years, the Government fell due to infighting. In 1980, Indira had a massive win with 353 seats.

Past experiences indicate that Indian voters always look for stability in the Government and the leadership of the PM candidate. The same Indira Gandhi, rejected by voters in 1977 polls, was returned to power with a massive mandate in 1980 as the Opposition that formed the Government, messed up due to infighting over leadership issues. The then Prime Minister Morarji Desai, was replaced by an over-ambitious Haryana leader, Charan Singh. But his Government fell.

Tamil Nadu Mandate: It is interesting to note that while almost the entire country voted for Modi, in Tamil Nadu, the regional political party, DMK projected Rahul Gandhi as PM candidate, which the Opposition failed to do at the national level. It was a battle of 'Modi vs Rahul'. With Anti-Modi sentiments riding high because of his support to a fledgling faction-ridden AIADMK without Jayalalitha, the DMK allies swept the polls, bagging 37 out of 38 seats. People suspected that the Central Government was puppeteering AIADMK and

was carrying out their dictates in the state without protecting the local interests. It may be recalled that during the 2014 elections when Jayalalitha campaigned, she promoted the slogan, "*Modi or Lady*". She bagged 37 out of 39 seats then.

So, past experiences clearly indicate that the people want a choice of strong leaders, and in its absence prefer the best available candidate. In the 2019 polls, it turned out to be Modi again as in 2014.

Challenges before Modi Government

As Modi begins his second five-year tenure as Prime Minister, he has all the odds of economic ills stacked against him. He faces several serious challenges at the political and economic level. High on the agenda of challenges that Modi faces are:



- Demonetisation and introduction of GST crushed the small trade and industry leaving them cash-strapped as the country runs on 85% cash transactions.
- The manufacturing sector is very sluggish. Due to the oil crisis (high prices of crude), India has to pay more foreign exchange for importing crude and POL (Petroleum, Oils and Lubricants) thus depleting its foreign exchange reserves. With sluggish exports, as incentives were low, South-East Asian countries competed fiercely with India over a variety of commodities including *basmati* rice, so much so, the Capital Account Deficit (CAD) has widened considerably, exerting pressure on inflation and fiscal deficit. CAD is the difference between import revenues and export earnings, and the former has exceeded the latter. Tax revenue has

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come down even though compliance has risen. This might lead to a deficit in the budget. Notwithstanding this, people have given a massive mandate to Modi to continue so that he can work on the 'structural reforms' introduced by him, which have however inadvertently caused collateral damage to the lower sections of trading classes.

- Although Modi promised job creation and *Ache Din* during the 2014 elections, people feel that nothing has materialised. Many of the schemes like 'Make in India', 'Start Up India', 'Stand up India', 'Skill India' have not been properly executed, keeping with the well-intended spirit of the programmes. A separate ministry to monitor these important schemes seems imperative to drive growth and generate more employment.
- The promise to bring back all black money from foreign countries and to punish the corrupt politicians has not yet been implemented fully till date. Unfortunately, candidates with tainted records have got re-elected to the *Lok Sabha* this time. The new regime should be firm and strong in dealing the corrupt severely.
- Since the BJP has returned to power, some of the aggressive *Hindutva* forces may re-emerge and create problems about cow vigilantism (some people were lynched on suspicion of slaughtering cows for the sake of eating beef). Even if there were such isolated incidents, a section of the media with a vested interest could blow this up at national and international levels and tarnish the country's image, creating unnecessary fear among the minorities. The Government should keep a tight leash on such aggressive elements and also that section of the media which may generate unwanted panic amongst the people.

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- In the earlier regime, the Government had put a ban on the flow of foreign funds to some NGOs, who were using the money for anti-national activities. These NGOs may create more trouble in a different form to show their anger against the Government. The Government should be firm on such NGOs and the persons who indulge in anti-national activities.
- Although BJP has swept almost the entire country, they were unable to convince some of the major Southern states like Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Andhra Pradesh. In the South, BJP is perceived as a North Indian party. In the past regime, the Government did not show much interest in the Southern states. Thus, while the entire country had the 'Modi Wave', the Southern states had the 'Anti-Modi Wave'. The new Government should develop the relationship with frequent visits to the Southern states. The current North-South divide must be bridged immediately.
- With the massive majority, now the *Modi Sarkar* can try to resolve the Kashmir issue firmly, so that terrorism can be under control.

Summing Up

Indian voters have given a historic mandate to Narendra Modi for the second time to govern the Nation, notwithstanding some of the negative aspects of its earlier regime. Indian voters have reposed faith and confidence in Modi, so that he can continue his efforts to improve the economy and living standards of the people. PreSense wishes Modi and his new team the very best to lead the nation to greater heights.

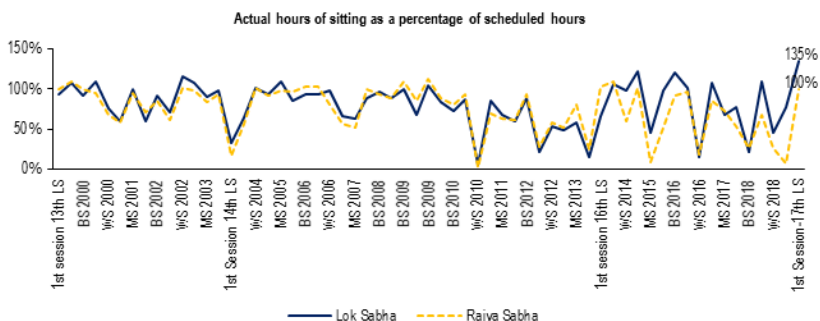
Performance of First Session of 17th Lok Sabha – Women MPs Top the Performance

By Priyadharshni Rahul, Deputy Editor (August 2019)

The Parliament's Budget Session was held from June 17th to August 7th, 2019. This was the first session after the elections for the 17th Lok Sabha. In the past, the Parliament used to hold a short session for oath-taking after the election of the new Lok Sabha, which was followed by the Budget Session.

In the 17th Lok Sabha, the oath-taking session was combined with the Budget Session. Initially, the session was planned to be held from June 17th 2019 to July 26th 2019. It was extended to August 7th 2019. During the Budget Session, Lok Sabha had sittings for 37 days and Rajya Sabha had sittings for 35 days.

Productivity – Highest in 20 Years



During this session, Lok Sabha worked for 281 hours which is 135% of the scheduled hours. This is higher than any other session of the Parliament in the past 20 years. On an average, Lok Sabha worked for 81% of its scheduled time in the past 20 years. Rajya Sabha worked for 195 hours which is 100% of the scheduled hours. On an average, Rajya Sabha has

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worked for 76% of its scheduled time during a session in the past 20 years.

Questions – Highest in 20 Years for Answers

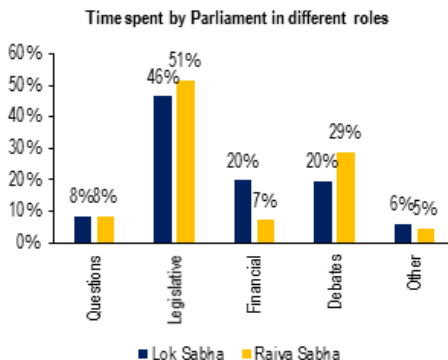
Question Hour functioned for 95% of its scheduled time in Lok Sabha and, 65% in Rajya Sabha during this session. During this session, 36% of the questions were answered orally in Lok Sabha by ministers. This is higher than any other session in the past 20 years. 40% of the questions received an oral answer from a minister in Rajya Sabha. This is the second highest among all sessions in the past 20 years.

On an average, 15% of the questions in Lok Sabha and 17% of the questions in Rajya Sabha received were answered orally during a session in the past 20 years.

Legislative Business is the Highest in Ten Years

The time spent by Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha during the first session is given in the chart displayed.

Lok Sabha spent 46% of its time on legislative business. The corresponding figure for Rajya Sabha is 51%.



38 Bills were introduced in Parliament during the Budget Session (excluding the Finance and Appropriation Bills). 28 Bills out of these were passed during this session. This is the highest for any session in the last 10 years.

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265 first-term MPs (Members of Parliament) have been elected to the 17th Lok Sabha. The number of women MPs in the 17th Lok Sabha is 78.

94% of the first-term MPs participated in a debate in the Budget Session. This is significantly higher than the 16th Lok Sabha where 82% of the first-term members participated in a debate in the first session.

Top Performers – Two Women MPs Top the Entire Lok Sabha

The performance of Members is evaluated by their Initiated Debates, Private Member's Bills, and Questions.



Ms Supriya Sule (NCP, Maharashtra) participated in 34 Initiated Debates, introduced 4 Private Members Bills and raised 109 Questions, bringing the total tally to 147. She is a third-time MP. She had

secured the No 1 position in the 16th Lok Sabha also. She is a Sansad Ratna Awardee.

Dr Heena Vijayakumar Gavit (BJP, Maharashtra) participated in 12 Initiated Debates and raised 106 questions with a total tally of 118. She is a second-time MP. She was honoured with Sansad Ratna Awards consecutively for four years during the 15th Lok Sabha.



PreSense congratulates both of them for their excellent performance during the first session of the 17th Lok Sabha.

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The 17th Lok Sabha has started with a big bang. It is hoped that the Members will continue to maintain this high spirit and guide the nation towards prosperity.

(Data Source: PRS Legislative Research)

How an Idea Becomes an Act of Parliament

***By Priyadharshni Rahul, Deputy Editor winter session of 2022
(Sep 2019)***

An Act of Parliament or Legislative Assembly governs every Indian or foreigner in this country. It is worthwhile to know as to how an idea or a concept becomes an Act of Parliament.

How an Idea is Conceived

The Government gets the idea to make an Act from different sources like (1) the Public, (2) the Industry or professional bodies, (3) Discussions in Parliament, (4) Private Members Bills or (5) from their own internal discussions. When the Government gets any idea or concept to make an Act, the Ministry concerned sends the input to the Law Ministry for a Draft Bill. The Ministry concerned and the Law Ministry then finalise the Draft Bill. After the approval of the Draft Bill by the Cabinet, the Bill requires the approval of both the Houses of Parliament and the President of India, before it becomes an Act.

Types of Bills presented to the Parliament

- Ordinary Bill
- Money Bill (Under Article 110 of the Constitution)
- Financial Bill (Under Article 117(1) and 117(3) of the Constitution)
- Constitution Amendment Bill

Legislative Procedure of an Ordinary Bill

Notice of Bill—A Minister or any other Member who desires to introduce a Bill has to give a seven-day notice in writing to move for 'leave to introduce the Bill'. The Speaker may, however, allow the motion to be moved at a shorter notice too.

Circulation of the Bill— A Bill will not be incorporated in the list of business for its introduction unless its copies are made available to the Members at least two days before the day on which the Bill is proposed to be introduced. However, Appropriation Bills, Finance Bills and such secret Bills are exceptions to this list of business. The Speaker may, however, permit the introduction of a Bill without prior circulation or after circulation for a period shorter than the stipulated two days if the Minister concerned is able to provide adequate reasons in a Memorandum for consideration of the Speaker.

Passage of the Bill – A Bill undergoes three readings in the House where it is introduced and should be passed with a simple majority for it to be considered passed in that House. The same procedure is followed in the second House, with or without amendments to the introduced Bill. The Constitution amendment Bills should be passed by not less than two-third the members of the House present and voting, but subject to half of the total strength of the House and should be passed in each House separately by this procedure. A joint sitting cannot be held in case of Money Bills, as Rajya Sabha does not have enough powers in respect of Money Bills.

If there is a deadlock in the passage of the Bill (if the second house rejects the said Bill altogether, or passes with amendments, or holds the Bill with no action for more than six months or if the first House does not agree to the amendments made by the second House), the President can summon a joint sitting to resolve it. The joint sitting is usually chaired by the Speaker of the Lok Sabha. If the majority of members present and voting in the joint sitting approve the Bill, the Bill is deemed to have been passed by both the

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Houses. However, Constitution Amendment Bills have to be passed in both the Houses separately. There will be 'Three Readings' for passage of all Bills.

First Reading

The First Reading refers to the Motion for Leave to introduce a Bill in the House by the Minister concerned. Motion for Leave to introduce a Bill may be opposed by any Member on general grounds or on the ground that the Bill initiates a legislation outside the legislative competence of the House. Any such opposition by the Member has to be given as a notice specifying the objections that are to be raised, by 10:00 hours on the day on which the Bill is included for introduction. The Speaker will then put to vote and decide on the introduction of the Bill. When the House gives permission to introduce the Bill, the Minister will say "I introduce the Bill". Now the Bill becomes the property of the House. With the permission of the Speaker, the Bill will be published in the Official Gazette of the Government.

Reference of Bill to Standing Committee

After the Bill has been introduced, the Presiding Officer of the House may refer the Bill to a Standing Committee with the concerns for examination and make reports thereon. A time limit of three months is normally prescribed. The Committee can also take opinion from experts and the general public who are interested in the measures. The report of the Committee shall be treated as considered advice given by the Committee.

Second Reading

During this stage the Bill goes through a detailed scrutiny and assumes its shape. This reading involves two stages. In the first stage, the House can decide to refer the Bill to a Select Committee or Joint Committee for scrutiny. Any amendment

can also be moved by any Member for any clause of the Bill. The Speaker will decide based on the vote.

The second stage of the Second Reading consists of clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill, as introduced in Lok Sabha or as reported by a Select or a Joint Committee or as passed by the other House, as the case may be. Discussion takes place on each clause of the Bill and amendments can be moved at this stage. Each amendment and each clause is put to vote of the House. The amendments become part of the Bill if they are accepted by a simple majority of members present and voting and the Second Reading is deemed to be over.

Third Reading

At this stage, the debate is mainly confined to acceptance or rejection of the Bill, with or without amendments, as a thorough scrutiny is done during the Second Reading. Debate is confined to arguments either in support or rejection of the Bill without referring to the details. Only formal, verbal or consequential amendments are allowed at this stage. If a majority of the Members present and voting accept the Bill, the Bill is deemed to have been passed by that House. If the said House is the initiating House, then the Bill is forwarded to the second House. If the said House is the second House, then the Bill is deemed to have been passed by both the Houses and moved for the President's assent.

Bill in the Second House

After the bill is passed by one House, it is forwarded to the second House for concurrence, with a message to that effect. Therefore, an introduction stage is not required in the second House. The Bill again goes through the same stages, *viz.* the Second Reading stage comprising either discussion on the motion that the Bill be taken into consideration or its reference to a Select Committee of that House and the Third Reading

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stage. The second House may either agree to the Bill, or return the Bill with amendments to the initiating House for its concurrence, or a joint sitting is summoned by the President if there is a deadlock.

Money Bills can be initiated only in Lok Sabha. Rajya Sabha is required to return a Money Bill passed and transmitted by Lok Sabha within a period of 14 days from the date of its receipt, with or without recommendations. It is open to Lok Sabha to accept or reject all or any of the recommendations of Rajya Sabha. However, if Rajya Sabha does not return a Money Bill within the prescribed period of 14 days, the Bill is deemed to have been passed by both the Houses of Parliament at the expiry of the period of 14 days in the form in which it was passed by Lok Sabha.

Assent of the President

Every Bill after being passed by both Houses of the Parliament is presented before the President of India for his assent. The President has three options: (Article 111)

- He may give his assent to the Bill; then it becomes an Act.
- He may return the Bill for reconsideration to the Houses,
- He may withhold the assent to the Bill;

Withdrawal of Bills

The Minister in charge of a Bill, who introduced the Bill in Lok Sabha or Rajya Sabha, may at any stage of the Bill, move for leave to withdraw the Bill on any specific ground listed in the Rules.

Ordinance Power of the President of India

When both the Houses are not in session, the President can promulgate ordinances under Article 123 of the Constitution.

Parliamentary approval is required during the next session within six weeks from the date the Parliament is in session. If the Parliament does not pass the Ordinance, it shall cease to operate. However, the President does not have any power to promulgate ordinances to amend the Constitution.

(Reference: The Legislative process in regard to Government Bills is governed by various provisions of the Constitution, the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha and the Directions by the Speaker, which include, *inter alia*, provisions contained in Articles 107 to 111, 117, 245 to 255 and 274 of the Constitution, Rules 64 to 159, 218, 219, 331E, 331H and 335 of the Rules of Procedure and Directions 19A to 26 and 31 to 37 of the Directions by the Speaker).

(Source: Lok Sabha Website)

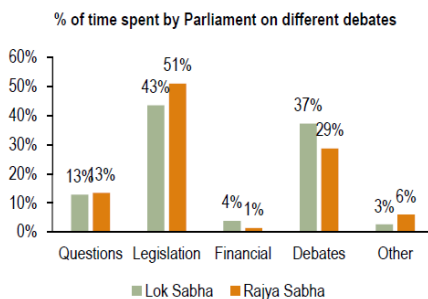
Performance of the Parliament till Winter Session 2019 – An Analysis

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Managing Editor (Dec 2019)

The second session of the 17th Lok Sabha was held between November 18th, 2019 and December 13th, 2019. During this session, the Parliament celebrated two milestones. A function was held in the Central Hall of the Parliament to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the enactment of the Constitution. This was also the 250th session of the Rajya Sabha.

Typically, a Parliament sitting is scheduled for six hours. The Lok Sabha worked for 111% of the scheduled time in this session. The Rajya Sabha worked for 92% of the scheduled time.

Productivity



The Lok Sabha spent 43% of its time on legislation, while the Rajya Sabha spent 51% of its time.

In the Lok Sabha, among the non-legislative debates, air pollution was discussed for eight hours, and

crop loss was discussed for 7.5 hours.

Among the non-legislative debates, the Rajya Sabha discussed the economic situation of India for 4.5 hours. In the context of its 250th session, the Upper House discussed its role in Indian polity.

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So far, the 17th Lok Sabha has held two sessions. In these two sessions, on an average, a Bill was discussed for 3.6 hours by the Lok Sabha and for 3.1 hours by the Rajya Sabha. This is higher than the previous two Lok Sabha sessions. During this session, 17 Bills were introduced in the Parliament (excluding an appropriation Bill). 14 Bills were passed by the Parliament. 13 Bills were passed by the Lok Sabha and 14 Bills were passed by the Rajya Sabha.

On an average, the Lok Sabha discussed a Bill for four hours and the Rajya Sabha discussed a Bill for 3.4 hours before passing it.

10 Bills were introduced and passed during this session. These include the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019, the Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes Bill, 2019, and the Taxation Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2019. These were discussed for more than seven hours each in Parliament.

Standing Committees

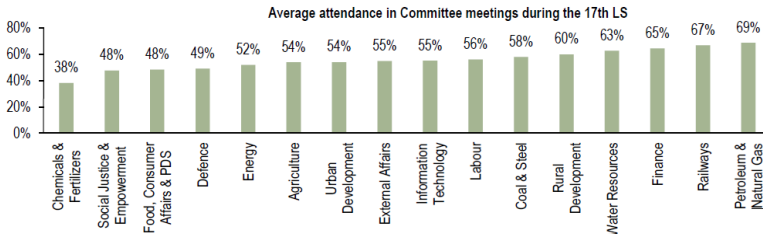
Standing Committees scrutinise Bills, expenditure by the Government, and other key policy issues. In this session, on an average, 55% of the members attended a Committee meeting (16 out of the 24 Standing Committees for which data is available). This is lower than the average attendance of MPs in Parliament (84%).

So far in the 17th Lok Sabha, four Bills have been referred to Parliamentary Committees. The DNA Technology Regulation Bill, 2019 and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2019 were referred to Standing Committees.

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The Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2019 was referred to a Rajya Sabha Select Committee, and the Personal Data Protection Bill 2019 was referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee.

On average, 55% members were present for Standing Committee meetings



Question Hour

In this session, Question Hour functioned for 88% of the scheduled time in Lok Sabha and 76% in Rajya Sabha. 37% questions in the Lok Sabha and 60% questions in the Rajya Sabha were answered orally during the session. This is the highest in the past 20 years.

Top Performers – Individuals

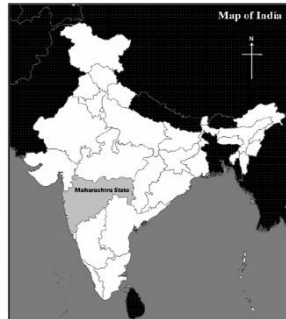


Supriya Sule

Supriya Sule (NCP – Maharashtra) topped in the Lok Sabha with a total tally of 224 (Initiated debates 53 + Private members Bills 4 + Questions 167). She is the topper even under the Questions category. She has attended 89% of the sittings. It may be recalled that Supriya Sule topped the list in the first session too.

Top Performers – States and Political Parties

Among the major States, Maharashtra (46 MPs) topped the list with an average tally of 80.1 per member. It may be noted that Maharashtra has been securing the first position consistently in the 14th, 15th and 16th Lok Sabhas. Kerala (20 MPs) secured the second position with an average tally of 71.0.



Maharashtra State
(shaded in grey
on the map of India)

Among the major political parties, Nationalist Congress Party has secured the top position with 104.5 points. Shiv Sena comes second with 78.9 points. Both are from Maharashtra.

The national average per member is 42.7.

PreSense congratulates all the achievers. PreSense congratulates the Hon'ble Speaker and Members for another productive session.

Data Source and Graphics: PRS India

Performance of Departmentally Related Standing Committees (DRSC)

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Mg. Editor (Jan 2020)

There are 24 'Departmentally Related Standing Committees' (16 Lok Sabha Committees and 8 Rajya Sabha Committees) attached to the Parliament. These Committees have 30

Performance of Departmentally Related Standing Committees

Committees	No. of Subjects Selected	No. of Bills Referred	No. of Sitzings	Reports presented
Agriculture	26	1	15	8
Finance	15		5	5
Social Justice & Empowerment	18	1	7	5
Coal & Steel	28		7	5
Information Technology	15	1	11	4
Chemicals and Fertilisers	8		7	4
Defence	16		5	4
Rural Development	11		6	3
Labour	34	1	18	3
Energy	28		10	2
Food & Consumer Affairs	18		6	2
Water Resources	19		6	2
Petroleum & Natural Gas	15		6	1
Urban Development	16		8	1
External Affairs	15	2	10	1
Railways	20		7	2
Total	302	6	134	52
Average	18.9	1.2	8.4	3.3

Source : Lok Sabha site
Data as on 25th Jan 2020

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Members (20 from Lok Sabha and 10 from Rajya Sabha). The Committees are headed by Senior Parliamentarians from different political parties. All the political parties are represented in the Committees. They have 3 main duties to perform:

- Select subjects relating to their Departments and discuss. Present the report with recommendations to the Parliament.
- Discuss the Bills referred to the Committee by the House and present the report to the Parliament.
- Scrutinise the budgetary proposals of the Ministry in detail and present the report to the Parliament.

The performance analysis of the Lok Sabha Committees is given in the adjacent table:

PreSense congratulates the Chairman and Members of the Agriculture Committee for their top performance among the Committees.

Since the Rajya Sabha site has not updated the information relating to their Committees, we are unable to analyse their performance.

(Data relates to the 17th Lok Sabha from the beginning till the end of the Budget Session 2018).

Suspension of MPLads Will Affect Rural People – An Appeal to the Government to Reconsider Decision

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Mg. Editor (April 2020)

Recently, the Indian Government decided to implement a 30% salary cut for all Members of Parliament (MPs) and also to suspend MPLads (Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme) for two years. Through the suspension of MPLads, the Government of India would receive Rs.7900 crores. While the Opposition parties have welcomed the salary cut for MPs, they have objected to the suspension of MPLads.

Coronavirus fight: Cabinet passes ordinance to suspend MPLADS fund till 2022

Union minister Prakash Javadekar said the fund from MPLADS scheme will go to Consolidated Fund of India to address the challenges in fight against COVID-19
BusinessToday.in New Delhi Last Updated: April 6, 2020 | 17:27 IST

Since many people are not aware of how MPLads works, there are few discussions about it in the mainline media. Some intellectuals have welcomed the Government's move without understanding the concept, due to their misconception about politics and politicians.

Many people are under the wrong impression that the MPs are given Rs.5 crores cash for their expenditure. As per the guidelines of MPLads, the Lok Sabha MPs can utilise the amount only for their parliamentary constituency. The Rajya Sabha MPs can use the funds for the state from where they are elected. The MPs cannot directly spend the money themselves. They can only recommend approved projects to the District Collector / District Magistrate for creation of capital assets against the allocation from MPLads. The District Authorities will implement the projects and claim funds from the Central Government allotment.

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Generally, the MPs recommend projects for the construction of toilets, buildings, and water tanks in schools and hospitals owned by the Government. They can also recommend the purchase of ambulances and medical equipment for the government hospitals within their constituency. They can allocate the funds for providing equipment to physically disabled persons. Even link roads connecting villages can be built using this fund. Community centres can be built to benefit cluster villages. By and large, MPLads has so far benefitted the rural people.

In order to gain the goodwill of the public, MPs would follow up with the district officials for speedy implementation of the projects recommended by them. It would be difficult for the District Collector or the State Governments concerned to execute such projects without MPLads or MLALads funds.

Suspension of MPLads for two years will definitely slow down development projects in the rural areas. Besides a slowdown for at least two years in the post lockdown era, this move would further deprive them of development projects for another two years.

Instead of suspending the entire 10 crores (for two years), the Government of India could have taken Rupees one or two crores per year for the health projects, and permitted the utilisation of the balance amount by the MPs for constituency-specific health and education related projects. The existing guidelines could have been modified accordingly for this purpose.

PreSense appeals to the Hon'ble Prime Minister to reconsider this decision.

Performance of Parliament till End of Budget Session 2020

By Priyadharshni Rahul, Deputy Editor (April 2020)

The current 17th Lok Sabha commenced its first session on 17th June 2019. The third session of the 17th Lok Sabha (Budget Session 2020) was adjourned *sine die* on 23rd March 2020. The 17th Lok Sabha has thus completed three sessions in 80 sittings.

Budget Session 2020

The budget session of the Parliament was held from 31st January 2020 to 23rd March 2020, with a recess from 12th February to 1st March 2020. The session was scheduled to have 31 sittings and conclude on 3rd April 2020. However, because of the public health emergency created by the Coronavirus outbreak, the Parliament was adjourned *sine die* on 23rd March 2020, after having sat for a total of 23 days.

Lower Productivity Due to Disruption

The overall productivity in this session was lower than the previous two sessions of the 17th Lok Sabha. While productivity was high in the first half, productivity in the second half declined due to disruptions in both Houses.

In this session, Lok Sabha sat for 86% of its scheduled time (as per sittings held till 23rd March 2020). In the first half, Lok Sabha functioned for 94% of the scheduled time, and post recess, it functioned for 82% of the scheduled time.

Rajya Sabha's productivity during the entire budget session was at 74%. In the first half, the Upper House functioned for

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94% of the scheduled time. Post recess, it functioned for 62% of the scheduled time.

The Parliament was interrupted on a few occasions as opposition members raised the issue of lack of law and order in multiple parts of Delhi. Seven MPs from Lok Sabha were suspended on 5th March for the remaining period of the session. This suspension was revoked on 11th March. The issue of law and order in Delhi was later discussed for 4-1/2 hours each in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.

Budget Discussion

During a budget session, after recess, Lok Sabha discusses the expenditure of selected ministries. This session, the expenditure of the following ministries was listed for discussion in Lok Sabha:

1. Railways,
2. Social Justice and Empowerment,
3. Tourism,
4. Health and Family Welfare,
5. External Affairs, and
6. Housing and Urban Affairs.

However, discussions were held on the expenditure of the ministries of Railways, Social Justice and Empowerment, and Tourism. These form 17% of the total expenditure of the central government. The remaining 83% of expenditure was 'guillotined' (or passed without discussion).

Top Performers of Lok Sabha (cumulative from first sitting to Budget Session 2020)

- Smt Supriya Sule (NCP – Maharashtra) has secured the first position with a total tally of 285 points for (a) Initiated

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Debates (b) Private Members Bills and (c) Question. She attended 89% of the sittings.

- Shri Shrirang Appa Barne (Shiv Sena – Maharashtra) has secured the second position with a total tally of 221 points. He attended 93% of the sittings.

Both of them are Sansad Ratna Awardees of the 16th Lok Sabha.

Performance of States (based on their Members performance)

Maharashtra (score 113.1) and Kerala (score 97.0) are the top scorers among all the major states.

Performance of Political Parties (based on their Members' performance)

- RSP (score 185) and AIMIE (score 146.5) are the toppers among the small parties.
- NCP (score 141.8) and Shiv Sena (score 113.2) are the toppers among the major parties.

PreSense congratulates the top performers among the individuals, the States, and the Political Parties.

Data Source: Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha websites and PRS India

Performance of Departmentally Related Standing Committees (DRSCs) in the 17th Lok Sabha

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Mg. Editor (May 2020)



The concept of Departmentally Related Standing Committees (DRSCs) was introduced in 1989 to help the Parliament to study the matters closely. Presently, 24 DRSCs function (16 Lok Sabha Committees and 8 Rajya Sabha Committees). Each Committee has 30 Members (20 from Lok Sabha and 10 from Rajya Sabha), nominated by the Speaker of the Lok Sabha or the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha. It is chaired either by a Lok Sabha or a Rajya Sabha Member, depending on the category of the Committee.

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Generally, the Committees take up any topic relating to their Ministry, discuss and present their reports to the Parliament. They also scrutinise Bills referred to them and 'Demands for Grant' of the Ministries concerned. All their reports are presented to the Parliament.

The performance of the top 3 Committees (From 1.6.2019 to 31.3.2020) is as follows:

Lok Sabha Committees		Rajya Sabha Committees	
Committee	Reports presented	Committee	Reports presented
Agriculture	13	Science and Technology, Environment, Forests and Climate Change	8
Information and Technology	12	Transport, Tourism and Culture	8
Finance	11	Human Resources Department	6

Data source: Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha websites

People are generally aware about the functioning of the Parliament. But they seldom know about the functioning of the Standing Committees. The Standing Committees are the real Unsung Heroes. Every year, PreSense honours the best Standing Committee with the Sansad Ratna Award. In the 16th Lok Sabha, the Finance Committee received the Award for presenting the maximum number of reports. Dr Veerappa Moily, a Congress Party leader, chaired the Finance Committee. The Committee Meetings are not open to the media. Political parties too cannot issue whip to their Members in the Standing Committees to adopt a particular line.

Do Political Parties Follow Democratic Norms in the Parliament?

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Mg. Editor (Sep 2024)

The Monsoon session of the Parliament was held for 10 days from 14 September 2020 to 23 September 2020, even though it was originally scheduled for 18 days. Around 68% of the Members of Parliament (MPs) participated in the session. Both the Houses (Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha) made appropriate arrangements for the MPs to ensure the maintenance of physical distancing protocols due to the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic.

During the session, the Parliament functioned in two parts, with one House sitting in the morning and the other, in the afternoon. However, the session was curtailed because of a public health emergency when several MPs were diagnosed with Covid-19. The Parliament adjourned *sine die* on 23rd September 2020 after functioning for 10 days. **Lok Sabha worked 145% of the scheduled time of the sitting days; Rajya Sabha, 99%.** Both the Houses of **Parliament met after a gap of 175 days – six days ahead of the constitutional requirement of a maximum gap of six months between sessions.**

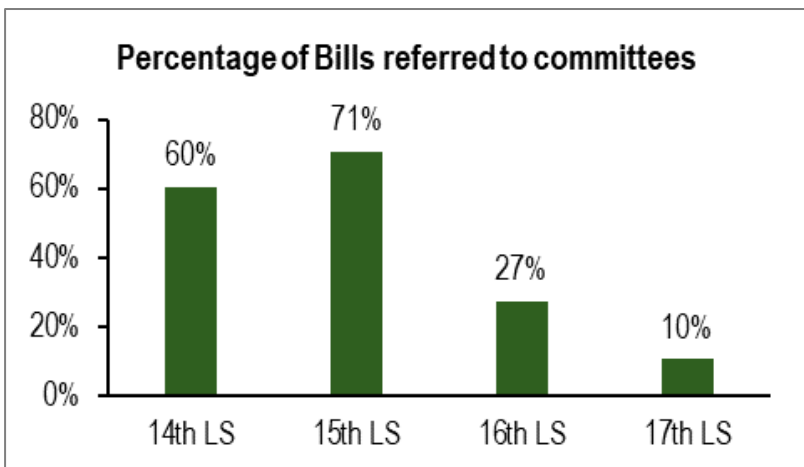
Legislative Business

In the Monsoon session, 20 new Bills were introduced (excluding the Appropriation Bills). Of these, eleven Bills were to replace Ordinances. These include three Bills related to agriculture trade and contract farming, one to expand RBI's regulation of cooperative banks, and three relating to Labour Codes on Social Security, Industrial Relations, and Occupational Safety.

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Twenty-five Bills were passed by the Parliament (excluding the Appropriation Bills). On an average, Lok Sabha discussed a Bill for 1.5 hours, and Rajya Sabha discussed a Bill for about an hour, before passing it. Lok Sabha discussed and passed the three Labour Codes within three hours, and Rajya Sabha passed them after 1 hour 45 minutes of discussion. Rajya Sabha passed 13 Bills within 7.5 hours in the last two days.

Allegations Against the Government



Political observers and Opposition parties blame the Government for hurriedly passing the Bills without detailed discussions in the Houses. Rajya Sabha passed 13 Bills within 7.5 hours in the last two days.

In spite of the negative growth of GDP, there was no discussion on the current economic situation, in both the Houses.

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Ruckus in the Parliament
(Photo courtesy: indianexpress.com)

There is also a general feeling amongst experts that the present Government does not give enough importance to the Standing Committees as they do not refer the Bills to the Committees for scrutiny. In earlier years, Bills were referred to the

Committees, where they get fine-tuned to the best interest of the public. In the current 17th Lok Sabha, only 10% of the Bills introduced so far have been referred to Committees. It is much lower than the 14th (60%), 15th (71%) and 16th (27%) Lok Sabha.

Another criticism against the ruling Government is that they take unduly long time to elect the Deputy Speaker. In the current 17th Lok Sabha, even after 464 days after the commencement of the first session, the Deputy Speaker is not yet elected. This is the longest period in the history of Lok Sabha, to go without a Deputy Speaker. In the 16th Lok Sabha, the Government took 70 days to elect the Deputy Speaker. Previously, this period was highest in the 12th Lok Sabha (269 days). Otherwise, the Deputy Speaker is normally elected within a short time of less than a month.

Criticism against Opposition

While the Opposition blames the Government for not following the Parliamentary norms, they are guilty of creating ruckus in the House and misbehaving before the Chair in the Rajya Sabha, leading to suspension of 8 Members. They boycotted the sessions too. This enabled the Government to pass the Bills without serious discussions. Creating a ruckus in the

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House, and stalling the proceedings have become a trend in the past 15 years. Stalling the proceedings is against the principles of democracy.

The Opposition may have genuine reasons for drawing the attention of the nation on any issue. But creating a ruckus and stalling the proceedings are against the interests of the people. They have to adopt different methods, like the mature democracies in UK and USA.

The people elect the Members to the Parliament to take care of the interest of the people and the nation and to frame suitable policies. Unless the ruling and opposition parties respect and value the traditions of the Parliamentary practices, our democracy cannot be successful. The ruling and the Opposition parties should instil confidence among the citizens by respecting and adhering to democratic and Parliamentary norms.

After over 70 years of Independence, the least the citizens can expect from the Government and the Opposition is a high level of maturity by following the democratic and defined norms in the Parliament.

(Data and graphics courtesy: PRS Legislative Research)

Indian Govt Passes Three Major Farm Bills as Part of Agrarian Reforms

By T N Ashok, Consulting Editor (Oct 2020)

The Indian Government has passed three major legislations in Parliament as part of its major effort to put agrarian reforms on track. The two major bills passed were – The Farmers Produce and Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill and the Farmers (Empowerment & Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill. The third legislation related to Essential Commodities Act. All three legislations replace ordinances promulgated by the government before the onset of Parliament's Monsoon session.

Reactions:

In a series of tweets, Prime Minister Modi described the legislation as a watershed moment in the history of Indian Agriculture. The ruling party members (BJP) called it a Big Bang reform. But the Congress-led opposition dubbed the legislation as being "historic for all the wrong reasons". The opposition demanded the bills be referred to a Joint Select Committee of the House for further examination of its provisions. BJP's long-time and strongest ally Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) was disappointed about the Bill and its minister in the cabinet, Harsimran Kaur Badal resigned from the cabinet over the issue.

What do the Bills contain?

The first bill seeks to prohibit the state governments from collecting market fees, cess, or levies for trade outside notified APMC (Agricultural Produce Market Committee) *mandis*. APMC is a marketing board established by a State Government to safeguard the farmers from exploitation by large retailers,

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and to ensure that farm-to-retail-price spread does not become excessively high. It also removes inter-state barriers and provides a framework for electronic trading directly between a buyer and a farmer, breaking state control over farmers and enabling them to choose the buyer and, of course, the price. This roots out money laundering practices too. State Governments are fuming over their alleged loss of control of farm produce and their distribution.

The second Bill opens up the market further and allows farmers to sell directly to corporate entities engaged in agricultural trade. The big players are Walmart, Pepsi Foods, Reliance and ITC Agro. Farmers led by the Opposition fear that prices can be manipulated by the corporate lobbies to their advantage with their infrastructure for distribution, financial and muscle power. But Government dismisses such fears as baseless, hoping that the competition among corporates will fetch a better price to farmers.

The third legislation is essentially an amendment seeking to remove some commodities from the essential commodities list—potatoes, tomatoes, and onions. The government justifies the move by arguing that removing these commodities from the essential commodities list will enable farmers to stock them in their godowns or elsewhere and sell them when the market is favourable instead of letting the huge, monopolistic middlemen do it.

Opposition's concern:

The concern of the Opposition is that the move undermines food security. But this is not true, says the Government, defending the legislations. The Government assures that the states still retain the power to control distribution and regularise it especially in times of exigencies like famine, shortages, wars etc. The legislations seem to strike at the heart of a big problem in the demand supply management,

hoarders and black marketers. Under the new legislations, they are sought to be rooted out. In a nutshell, the Government is trying to open up the agriculture market, ensuring minimum price and food security. The Minimum Support Price (MSP) continues to hold good, to ensure fair price for the farmers produce.

Some farmer organisations are protesting, maybe because of lack of clarity on the MSP issue which they fear is being dispensed with, though actually it is not. The Centre would do well to reiterate their categorical assurance that the Government-administered pricing mechanism under MSP is not being dispensed with. The problem started with a massive protest by Haryana farmers, who blocked all roads and highways soon after the Bills were introduced. They feared that the Bills were not beneficial to them. There were massive rallies and protests in Punjab too under the Congress Government, which in a democracy like India is quite understandable. And now, it is official news that after over a month of protests by farmers against the three farm laws enacted by the Central Government, a special session of the Punjab Assembly on Tuesday (October 20) not only **rejected the three laws of the Centre by a unanimous resolution** but also passed **Amendment Bills** removing Punjab from the ambit of the central laws. It would be a good academic and Constitutional subject for study, if all the non-BJP states in the country adopt a similar stand and pass similar Acts!

Minister's assurance on MSP:

Union Agriculture Minister Narendra Singh Tomar has said: "MSPs won't be touched at any cost. Not just these Bills, many steps have been taken to double farmers' income in the past six years. There is no doubt that farmers will continue to get MSP." Former PM and agriculturist Deve Gowda has expressed concerns over farmers' so-called plight saying: "As a farmer I

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am really concerned with issues related to the farm bills. The entire House, all of us are concerned about farmers. Farmers are the backbone of the country. The Prime Minister should explain why there is a hurry to pass the Bills amid the pandemic."

The infographic is divided into two main sections: 'MYTH' on the left and 'REALITY' on the right. Each section contains a list of points, each preceded by a yellow diamond icon. The background of the infographic features a faint image of a person's face.

MYTH	REALITY
◆ The two new bills regarding agriculture market reforms are aimed at ending Minimum Support Price for farmers.	◆ Farm bills are not going to affect MSP at all. The bill deals with additional trading opportunities for farmers outside the APMC market
◆ The proposed laws are anti-farmers since the market force will decide their fate.	◆ On the contrary, farmers can make more benefit by selling their produce to anyone by entering into an agreement. Middlemen stand removed from the process.
◆ This is an act of taking away the powers of states by nullifying APMC yards.	◆ States can still have APMCs under their law, but can't force farmers to sell only to them. This is about giving more choices to farmers.
◆ Modi government pushing farmers to the sphere of exploitation by allowing contracts with big corporates.	◆ Contract farming is already in practice under APMC laws. Some examples of contract farming are seen in Punjab (PepsiCo), West Bengal (PepsiCo) and Haryana (SAB Miller). Moreover, the UPA had also formulated laws to encourage states for contract farming.

Government's clarification – Graphics courtesy thetrupicture.org

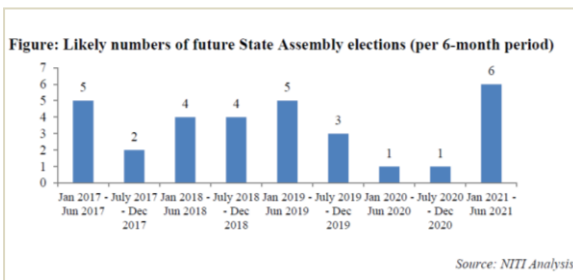
Whether the farm bills benefit the farmers or not, whether the legislations seek to double the farmers' income or not, whether the Opposition's criticisms of the bill that farmers will not actually benefit if the existing chain of demand and supply management is disturbed is something one can answer only when the law is enforced in right earnest and the results follow. Perhaps in the next few agricultural seasons, we will know the outcome.

Is Simultaneous Election Feasible?

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Mg. Editor (Dec 2020)

Background

Recently, while addressing the 80th All India Presiding Officers' Conference, Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged the authorities to simplify the laws to enable 'One Nation, One Election', and a single voters' list for polls. He wanted the people to discuss the feasibility of 'Simultaneous Elections' for both Lok Sabha and State Assemblies.

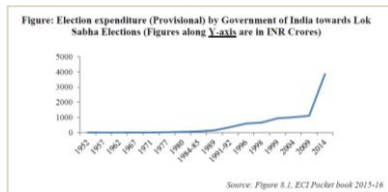


'Simultaneous Elections' is not new to India. The first four General Elections to Lok Sabha (1952 to 1967) and various State Assemblies were

held simultaneously. Thereafter, due to the dissolution of some State Assemblies and the premature dissolution of Lok Sabha, the election cycle got disrupted. Besides the General Elections for Lok Sabha, the Election Commission has to conduct elections for five to six State Assemblies every year at different times, depending on the term of completion of the individual State Assemblies.

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Conducting the Indian General Elections is the biggest event management in the world. Besides incurring a huge expenditure, the Election Commission of India (ECI) deploys more than 10 million Government officials and security forces during this election period. Preparation of the voters' list involves expenditure and deployment of Government officials. This is in addition to the strain for the political parties, and a huge expenditure. According to Narayanan Thirupathy, BJP Spokesperson, the Government spends around Rs.10,000 crores every five year towards the General Elections. According to him, the political parties spent around Rs.30,000/- crores in the 2014 General Elections and Rs.60,000/- crores in the 2019 General Elections.



Since elections are held every year for different states, the government machinery and the security forces are engaged in election duty, and routine official work gets dislocated. Other issues include (1) disruption of normal public life, (2) perpetuation of communal and caste issues, and (3) adverse impact on the focus of governance and policy for electoral gains.

The problems that arise due to the imposition of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC), have been articulated by the Parliamentary Standing Committee in its 79th report. The Committee states *"The imposition of Model Code of Conduct (MCC) puts on hold the entire development programme and activities of the Union and State Governments in the poll bound State. It even affects the normal governance. Frequent elections lead to imposition of MCC over prolonged periods of time. This often leads to policy paralysis and governance deficit"*.

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The Prime Minister said that the political parties and the Executives were always in the election mode due to frequent elections in the country, and many of the development schemes could not be announced or implemented due to the Model Code of Conduct, applicable at different parts of the country. Further, the multi-phased elections (upto 7 phases) create more strain to the Government machinery and political parties.

Constitutional Provisions

The Indian Constitution (Article 83(2) and 172(1)) provides for a normal term of five years for the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies from the date of the first sitting. Since they do not have any fixed time, they could be dissolved earlier than its normal term. The tenure of the House cannot be extended beyond five years except in an emergency situation.

Sections 14 and 15 of the Representation of People Act 1951 empower the Election Commission to notify and conduct elections to both the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies six months before the end of the normal term.

Other Countries

According to United Kingdom's Fixed-term Parliaments Act, 2011, the tenure of the Parliament is fixed at five years. Elections will be held on the first Thursday of May every fifth year. The Parliament can be dissolved only when the motion is passed by a two-thirds majority (including vacant seats) or when an alternate Government cannot be formed within 14 days from a No-Confidence motion. Elections will be held only for the remainder period.

According to the Federal Republic of Germany's Basic Law (Article 67 – Constructive vote of no confidence), lack of

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confidence can be expressed only after electing the successor with a majority.

Reports of the Official Committees

The Law Commission of India headed by Hon'ble Justice B. P. Jeevan Reddy, in its 170th report on Reform of Electoral Laws (1999), suggests an end to elections every year, and insists on one election every five years.

The Election Commission of India (ECI) also wrote to the Government in November 1999, that the separate electoral rolls prepared by the ECI and State EC created confusion.

In 2015, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice in its 79th report analysed the 'Feasibility of Holding Simultaneous Elections to the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies'. They sought the views of all the political parties and stakeholders. After an in-depth study, the Committee accepted that there were challenges in frequent elections, and recommended 'Two-Phase' elections, Phase One for Lok Sabha and some State Assemblies and Phase Two after 30 months for remaining State Assemblies, grouping various State Assemblies together based on their tenure.

Since ECI has the powers to notify and conduct elections six months before the end of the term, the Committee has suggested grouping of the State Assemblies either by curtailing or extending the term to synchronise with the General Elections as a 'one-time measure'.

This could be implemented by a consensus with the political parties and through a Parliament resolution. In this process, assuming that this scheme is implemented from the 2024 General Elections after consensus, around 16 State Assemblies and Lok Sabha Elections will be held in the first phase in May 2024. The second phase of elections for the remaining State

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Assemblies will be held somewhere during November-December 2026 (midway of 2024 and 2029). The 79th Parliamentary Committee Report explains this proposal with a detailed chart.

Reactions from Political Parties

Some of the political parties like Indian National Congress, Trinamool Congress, NCP, and Communist parties have expressed reservations about the executability and operational feasibility. This is the biggest challenge.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had called for an all-party meet in June 2019 to discuss and arrive at a consensus among the political parties, on this issue. Out of 40 invited parties, only 21 were present and three shared their views in writing. Indian National Congress, Trinamool Congress, BSP, SP, DMK, AAP and Shiv Sena did not participate.

Criticisms

T K Rangarajan, former MP and Senior Leader of CPI(M) feels that this initiative would disturb the federal structure of our country, and only national parties would dominate, eliminating the regional parties. He also expressed the concern that the ruling party at the centre might create instability in the opposition party-ruled states, in order to bring the state under the President's Rule. He felt that such simultaneous elections were not implementable. He alleges that this initiative would be a politically motivated one, to bring the entire country under one rule.

During discussions with apolitical people, there was apprehension expressed about regional issues fading away in simultaneous elections. Hence, the regional parties are reluctant to accept the proposed election reforms.

Expert Views

Former Chief Election Commissioner of India T S Krishnamurthy, speaking to PreSense, said that 'simultaneous elections' is theoretically an attractive proposition. He also said that Constitutional changes were needed to ensure fixed tenure of legislatures and transition provisions, giving right to extend or curtail tenure of existing state legislatures. He cautioned that simultaneous elections might pose administrative problems with deployment of more para military forces to maintain law and order.

T S Krishnamurthy, added that as a first step, before considering simultaneous elections, instead of multi-phased elections for Parliament and State Assemblies in the current system, we should hold 'single day' elections, excluding certain identified regions for security reasons. He agreed that 'simultaneous elections' would save enormous expenditure for the Government and for the political parties. He summed up saying that advantages outweighed the disadvantages.

Srinivasa Prabhu, Joint Secretary (Retired) of the Lok Sabha Secretariat and a Constitutional expert, speaking to PreSense, said that if a mid-term election was held for Lok Sabha or State Assemblies after a no-confidence motion without any possibility of a new Government, the election should be held only for the remaining period of the term of the House. He said that none of the political parties were interested in dissolving the House, to face elections. They would therefore explore all possibilities of forming an alternate Government. He agreed that during simultaneous elections, the national issues might overwhelm the regional issues, triggering the regional parties to work hard when they were in power.

Prof. G Ramesh, Professor of Public Policy, Indian Institute of Management, Bengaluru said that corruption increased due to huge election expenses. Due to frequent elections happening

across the country, the Government is not in a position to take any bold reform decisions for electoral reasons. He supported the suggestion the Parliamentary Committee gave (79th Report) for two-phase elections. He said that holding simultaneous elections for Lok Sabha and State Assemblies once in five years was infeasible.

Dr E M Sudarsana Nachiappan, a former Rajya Sabha Member of Parliament (MP) representing the Indian National Congress, was the Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee. He presented the 79th report to the Parliament in December 2015. NITI Aayog has also accepted this report.

Speaking to PreSense, Dr Sudarsana Nachiappan said that during the first General Elections in 1952, when Congress had prominent national and regional leaders, they could not win in some of the State Assemblies. Even in the 2019 General Elections, when some State Assemblies went to polls along with Lok Sabha polls, BJP got a lower percentage in the Assembly segments of some states than what they polled for Lok Sabha. Based on this observation, he allayed the fears that the federal set-up of the nation would be disturbed. The enactment of the Anti-Defection Act in 1985 and the Supreme Court Judgement in the SR Bommai Case (1994), have made it difficult for the ruling party at the centre to dissolve State Assemblies, according to their whims and fancies, he said. Indian democracy matures day by day, encouraging us to move forward with the reforms.

Dr Sudarshan Nachiappan also quoted the example of the Fixed Time Parliament Act 2011 of the United Kingdom, where an Act fixed the tenure of their Parliament. In his 79th Report, he suggested a model that a specific term could be fixed for Lok Sabha and State Assemblies, and dissolution could be made tighter.

Conclusion and Way Forward

We consulted many political leaders and experts while researching this Cover Story. There is consensus that much money is being spent during elections, leading to corruption. There is a general feeling that the country urgently needs electoral reforms to curb money power.

In the past three decades, we have seen the trend that whenever a new reform policy is mooted by the ruling party, the opposition parties give a knee-jerk reaction, opposing the proposal and demanding its immediate withdrawal, without going into the merits of the suggestion. At the same time, when the opposition comes to power, they implement those very policies quickly. The previous ruling party, now in the opposition, opposes the same policy, which they had mooted earlier. Although democracy seems mature because of voting by the people, political parties need to improve their attitude and approach, to look into any proposal objectively, keeping the nation's interest in sight, and not their political interest.

In 1991, when Congress introduced liberalisation, all the opposition parties opposed it tooth and nail. Later on, when they came to power, they implemented it. BJP, which had opposed the Aadhar card and GST when they were in the opposition, implemented them after they assumed power. Unfortunately, Congress, which had piloted the idea, is now opposing the proposal. Similarly, the political parties that were in power earlier and had proposed the NEET Examination and various road projects and industry projects are now opposing the Opposition. 'Opposing for the sake of opposition' is not in the nation's interest.

Various governments and expert committees have mooted and developed the idea of simultaneous elections over the past twenty years. In the interest of the nation first, all political parties and stakeholders should critically discuss the concept

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and come up with a solution for electoral reforms and simultaneous elections.



Dr E M Sudarsana Nachiappan, Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha) was the Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee which went into the various aspects of 'Simultaneous Elections' and presented the report to the Parliament in December 2015. This 79th report, which is the latest official document available for discussion on the subject, can be downloaded from the link: <http://tinyurl.com/report79> .

As Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee, he also presented a report (No. 18) on 'Electoral Reforms' to the Parliament.

Interactive Session with Dr Sudarsana Nachiappan | 24th Jan 2021

Dr E M Sudarsana Nachiappan will share his views on "Electoral Reforms and Simultaneous Elections" on Sunday, 24th January 2021, at 4.00 pm before an invited audience through the virtual Zoom platform.

This programme organised by your eMagazine PreSense can be watched live on YouTube in the link:

<https://youtu.be/ZbOZHs-2fxk> .

Know About the Union Budget

***By Prime Point Srinivasan, Publisher & Managing Editor,
with Susan Koshy, Editor-in-Chief (Jan 2021)***

The Annual Financial Statement, which is more commonly known as the Union Budget is the Estimate of the Income and Expenditure of the Central Government for a definite duration, which is usually one year. Much planning and exercise goes into the preparation of the Union Budget and there is more to it after its presentation in the Parliament by the Union Finance Minister.

Your eMagazine
PreSense had the
privilege of interviewing
Mr M R Sivaraman,
Former Revenue

Secretary, Government of India, with many years of experience in the preparation of the Union Budget and State Budgets. We bring you a synopsis of the interview about the Union Budget – Preparation, Presentation, Implementation and Audit.



Q1. We are familiar with the Hon'ble Finance Minister walking into the Parliament with the red cloth bag of documents, for presentation of the Union Budget. What goes into preparing the Union Budget, before it is ready for presentation?

There are six Articles in the Indian Constitution dealing with the Union Budget, and corresponding six Articles dealing with the State Budget. Article 112 deals with the presentation of the Annual Financial Statement, which is the analogue of the company (Government in this case).

The Government has certain commitments to fulfil, irrespective of whether it has enough money to fulfil them or not, such as the expenditure relating to the Judiciary, the Parliament, the President's Office, Interest payments to the public and other countries, Repayment of Loans. These are 'charged on the budget'. They are discussed in the parliament but not voted. The administration of the country which includes the expenditure on defence, police and similar forces, and those of other administrative departments of the government are committed expenditure even though economy cuts can sometimes be imposed on them.

Preparatory Exercise

In the month of October each year, the Government calls for the Budget estimates from all its departments and ministries. To arrive at this estimate, the actual expenditure for the completed period is first ascertained, and then the projected expenditure for the remaining months of the financial year. For example, in the current year 2020-21, the defence expenditure has unexpectedly escalated with the need for more equipment, high altitude clothing for the soldiers, arms and ammunition, warm tents and food, due to the emergency situation at the national border. These are added in what we call the Supplementary Budget, which will be part of the revised Estimate. Then, the Budget for the following financial year is estimated.

Every ministry has its normal schemes and projects. In normal, healthy practice, projects are classified under different categories – projects that can be completed in the current year, those that can be completed in the ensuing year, and so on. The budget for those projects that are already underway and require additional allocation for completion, is given priority over new projects so that they are completed and utilised.

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The Financial Advisor in consultation with the Joint Secretary and other officials, prepares the Budget for the ministry. When these proposals reach the Finance Ministry, they are examined and fine-tuned in consultation with the respective departments. The resources are divided into tax and non-tax sources. The Revenue Department consisting of the Central Boards of Direct and Indirect Taxes are involved in elaborate exercises, based on past performance and projections. For example, the services sector which accounts for 58% of the GDP has suffered due to the COVID situation this year. This factor has to be taken into consideration while planning for the next year. This is done by consulting with the various sectors of the economy. This exercise takes place in November-December. Extensive and detailed discussions are held with all the stakeholders, and notes are taken, prior to the preparation of the Budget. Experts and professionals in the respective fields are consulted while preparing the tax proposals.

The Finance Secretary then sits with his team and finalises the Expenditure Budget while the Resources Budget, including changes in taxes if any, is finalised by the Revenue Secretary. The tax proposals go under the signature of the Revenue Secretary. The consolidation of the budget and the finalisation of the budget speech is done by the Finance Secretary, who is the most senior secretary in the ministry in terms of service in the ministry.

Q2. How is the Budget dealt with, in the Parliament for its approval?

The finalised Budget is discussed in detail with the Prime Minister, by the team. Thereafter, the Budget is printed. One hour before the presentation, the Cabinet meets in the Parliament House and a summary is presented for their comprehension. The Presentation of the Union Budget is then made in the Parliament. The Bills, such as the Finance Bill, and



Appropriation Bills, are introduced. The approval of the President of India is necessary before the presentation of the Union Budget, with the Appropriation Bill (which includes Demand for Grants) and the Finance Bill.

The Appropriation Bill consists of the expenditure and receipts from the various ministries. The expenditure is prepared as a 'Demand for Grant'. Demand for Grant is the request for approval of the expenditure incurred/to be incurred by the respective ministries. A Cut Motion is a special power vested in the Members of the Lok Sabha, to oppose a demand being discussed for specific allocation by the ministry, in the Government Bill, as part of the Demand for Grants. The cut/reduction can be a token amount of Rupee one. These Demands are then voted by the Parliament for approval. Similarly, the Appropriation Bill is discussed. The Finance Bill deals with changes in Customs and Excise Duty, Income and Corporate Taxes. Changes in GST (Goods & Services Tax) have to be approved by the GST Council of India.

Q3. Once the Budget is approved in the Parliament, what does the Government do with the approved Budget?

Once the Budget is approved, the grants are communicated to the various ministries. It is the responsibility of the Financial Advisor and the Joint Secretary to take care of the periodical disbursement of the funds to the ministries or State Governments.

Q4. As the funds are utilised by the ministries in the course of the year, there is an element of auditing of the utilisation of funds. How is this carried out?

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The Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG), an independent Constitutional Authority, audits the accounts of the Central and State Governments, and submits the audit reports to the President of India. This report is examined by the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of the Parliament, headed by an Opposition Leader. In case of surplus of expenditure over the budgeted estimate, the ministry concerned has to explain to a Parliamentary Committee, to justify the surplus expenditure without seeking a Supplementary Budget. In case of an emergency as had occurred recently for the Defence Ministry because of the development in the borders, a Supplemental Budget can be proposed and approved, or reasons justified if expenditure has exceeded the allocation. PAC can raise observations based on the reports, and the ministry concerned would be required to respond to the queries. These responses will be submitted to the Action Taken Committee of the Parliament. India's Union Budget is considered as one of the most transparent budgets in the world.

Q5. In your opinion, what should the focus of the forthcoming Budget for FY 2021-2022 be?

It should focus primarily on the creation of demand for capital goods and consumer goods. This is a complicated exercise since it involves the GST factor, which does not come directly under the Union Budget. Some of the industries that critically need revival are tourism, construction, and automobile. The extent of taxes in the price of an automobile is 45% - almost the highest in the world.

There is at least 25% tax evasion in the country. We need to address this, and increase the tax revenue to the GDP of the country. Otherwise, it is challenging to depend mainly on borrowings.

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Therefore, the focus should be:

- 1)Reviving the demand quickly,
- 2)Streamlining tax rates and raising the tax revenue of the country,
- 3)Encouraging employment generation,
- 4)Enabling Unemployment Security to migrant workers through a calibrated unemployment relief scheme.

It is advisable that the Finance Minister associate experienced former government officials for their expertise and advice, which would be valuable, while planning and drawing up the country's Budget.

The complete interview can be watched on:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5t8Py3iCZ48>

Review of Performance of Parliament Up to Part I of Budget Session 2021

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Mg. Editor (Feb 2021)

Part I of the Budget Session 2021 started on 29th January 2021 and functioned till 13th February 2021. They sat for 12 days. The productivity for Lok Sabha was 99% and that of Rajya Sabha was 100%. Being the first Session of 2021, the Parliament started with the Hon'ble President of India addressing the Members of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha jointly.

Five Bills were introduced (excluding Finance Bill) during this session. The Budget for 2021-22 was presented by the Hon'ble Finance Minister. In the Lok Sabha, the Budget was discussed for 14 hours 42 minutes with the participation of 139 members. In the Rajya Sabha, the Budget was discussed for nearly 11 hours with the participation of 45 members.

Toppers in Overall Performance (1st June 2019 – 13th Feb 2021) 17th Lok Sabha

Name	Initiated Debates	Questions	Private Members Bills	Total	Attendance
Smt. Supriya Sule, NCP, Maharashtra	83	286	4	371	89%

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Shri Shrirang Appa Barne, Shiv Sena, Maharashtra	36	259	4	299	94%
Shri Subash Ramrao Bhamre, BJP, Maharashtra	15	277	0	292	86%
Shri Amol Ramsing Kolhe, NCP, Maharashtra	14	277	0	291	59%

Smt Supriya Sule is the topper in (a) Total Tally of Initiated Debates, Private Members Bills and Questions (b) Questions and (c) among Women Members. She is a *Sansad Ratna Awardee*. She is nominated for *Sansad Maha Ratna Award* for her consistent performance in the 16th Lok Sabha.

Shri N K Premachandran (RSP, Kerala) is the topper in Private Members Bills. (He has introduced 7 Private Members Bills). He is also a *Sansad Ratna Awardee* of the 16th Lok Sabha. He is now a Member of the Jury Committee for *Sansad Ratna Awards*.

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Shri Aadhir Ranjan Chawdhury (INC, West Bengal) is the topper in Initiated Debates. (He participated in 124 Initiated Debates).

Top Performing States

Among the states, Maharashtra and Kerala have scored highest in performance.

Maharashtra State has been the topper consistently from the 14th Lok Sabha. In the 17th Lok Sabha, since the first sitting, the average score per member from Maharashtra for the Total Tally of Initiated Debates, Private Members Bills and Questions is 140.7 (National average is 75). Besides topping the Total Tally, Maharashtra also tops under Questions with 129.7 per member (National average is 65.2).

Kerala State comes second for the Total Tally with 128.1 per member. Kerala stands first under Initiated Debates with an average score of 32.4 per member (National average is 15.4).

PreSense congratulates the top performing Lok Sabha MPs (Members of Parliament) and also the Members of Maharashtra and Kerala, for their effective participation.

(Data source: PRS India | The data relates to the period from the first sitting of the 17th Lok Sabha till the end of Part 1 of Budget Session 2021)

A Quick Review of Budget Session 2021 in Parliament

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Mg. Editor (May 2021)

The fifth Session (Budget 2021) of the 17th Lok Sabha commenced on 29th January 2021 and ended on 25th March 2021, two weeks ahead of the scheduled time. During the Budget Session, Lok Sabha sat for 34 days and Rajya Sabha for 33 days.

All the political parties joined together to cut short the sessions due to the Assembly elections in five states. Because of the elections, the average attendance in the Lok Sabha dipped to 71% and in the Rajya Sabha to 74% while it was in session.

Last year too, the Parliamentary functions were derailed due to the pandemic.

Even though the Government was aware of the election schedules in various states, the schedule of the Parliament sessions overlapped with that of the Assembly elections.

For the past many years, Parliament sittings have been cut short due to assembly elections. At least in future, the Government should schedule Parliament sessions, keeping in mind the state elections, so that Parliament time is fully utilised for official business.

Although the Government wanted to introduce 19 Bills in this session, they could introduce only 13 Bills, and none of them was referred to the Parliamentary Committee.

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Parliamentary Committees

Parliamentary Committees play a stellar role in the Parliamentary system by scrutinising Bills and Demands for Grants and giving their suggestions on matters relating to the respective Ministries.

Unfortunately, in recent years, the Government has not been taking advantage of the Parliamentary Committees for scrutiny. When Bills are passed without scrutiny by the Committees (consisting of all political parties) and without much discussion in the House, they get into a controversy and then go for judicial scrutiny, delaying the benefit to the people.

60% of the Bills were referred to Committees in the 14th Lok Sabha (2004-2009), and 71% in the 15th Lok Sabha. It was reduced to 27% in the 16th Lok Sabha, and to 11% in the current 17th Lok Sabha.

The Parliamentary Committees are also not meeting physically due to the pandemic situation. With the availability of technology under the Digital India concept, the Government should explore the possibility of running the Committees online, so that the system runs smoothly.

Top Performers

Overall top performers from the first sitting till the end of current Budget Session of 17th Lok Sabha are as follows:

Name	Initiated debates	Private Members Bills	Questions	Total	Attendance
Ms. Supriya Sule,	93	4	313	410	90%

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Maharashtra					
Mr. Shrirang Appa Barne, Maharashtra	42	4	298	344	95%
Mr. Bidyut Baran Mahato, Jharkhand	33	0	300	333	77%

Data Source: PRS India

Mr Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury (West Bengal) tops under Debates with a score of 124 under Initiated Debates.

Mr N K Premachandran (Kerala), Kirit Premjibhai Solanki (Gujarat) and Mr Gopal Chinayya Shetty (Maharashtra) have introduced 7 Private Members Bills each and top this category.

Ms Supriya Sule (Maharashtra) has raised 313 Questions and tops this category.

Mr N K Premachandran, Ms Supriya Sule and Mr Shrirang Appa Barne are recipients of the Sansad Ratna Award, instituted by this eMagazine PreSense.

PreSense congratulates all the top performers.

Mother India@75 Sorrows Over Parliament Disruption

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Mg. Editor (August 2021)

The Indian Parliament's Monsoon Session 2021, which commenced on 19th July, was adjourned *sine die* on 11th August 2021, two days ahead of its scheduled time. The 17th Lok Sabha saw its session cut short for the fourth consecutive time ahead of its scheduled date. Also, the Winter Session of November 2020 could not be held due to Covid fears. Both the Houses of Parliament were disrupted by opposition members and were forcefully adjourned. Lok Sabha worked only for 21% of the Scheduled time and Rajya Sabha for 29%.



Opposition parties disrupted proceedings demanding a debate on the alleged Pegasus software snooping on journalists, MPs, ministers, and opposition parties based on a media house report, The Wire. Opposition led by the TMC called it Pegasus Snoop Gate. Though the BJP led NDA Government offered to allot time to discuss all the issues of the so-called Pegasus spyware thread bare, the Congress and TMC led opposition was not interested creating an impression disruption was the only goal.

The government however managed to introduce 15 Bills and get them passed with its majority in the house. All the bills were passed in both the Houses amidst the din without any discussion. Paradoxically, an adamant Opposition, which was disrupting proceedings in both houses, came forward to discuss the 127th Constitutional Amendment relating to Other Backward Classes (OBCs), presumably in pursuance of an electoral gain. Strangely, the Lok Sabha spent 474 minutes and Rajya Sabha 360 minutes discussing the 127th Constitutional Amendment bill, while other draft legislations were passed without discussion.

Commentary & Analysis

Though the Government was willing to discuss all issues raised by the Opposition, it was insisting on a debate only on the Pegasus issue, to be discussed on priority basis. The same opposition leaders, who were in the Government earlier, knew pretty well that the matter was sub-judice, as it was already in the realm of the Supreme Court. Besides, any open discussion on such sensitive matters involving national security in a public domain was also not possible, but a clear breach of security protocols.

Besides, it is common knowledge that every person holding a smart phone and downloading mobile apps is susceptible to snooping without his or her knowledge. Pegasus may not be

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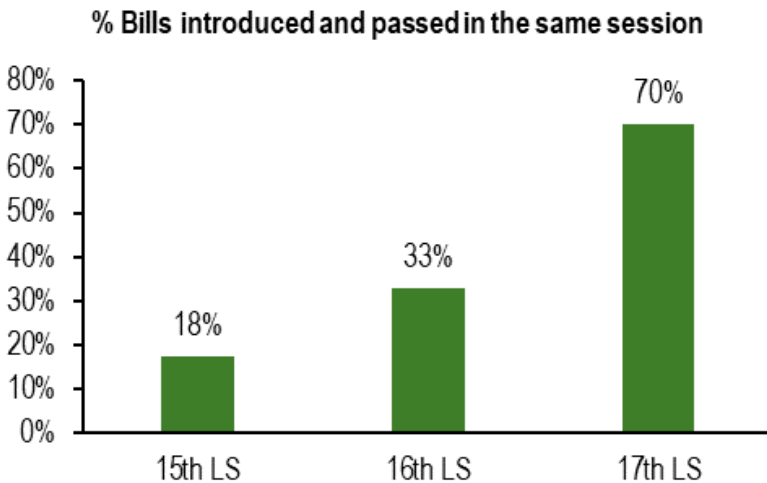
a serious issue for the common man. But the opposition could have followed parliamentary protocols by requesting the Business Advisory Committee, for allotting time for a detailed discussion on various issues affecting the common man such as unemployment, economy, fuel price, price rise, inflation more relevant to their constituencies. Sadly, they did not even allow the Prime Minister to introduce the new Cabinet Ministers, as per the Parliament procedure.

Such irresponsible behaviour of some opposition members freed the Government of its obligation to escape from discussions on such vital matters. An intelligent Opposition could have prepared an agenda of alleged government failures and discussed the same in both houses, relayed live by both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha in-house TV networks. They could have grabbed headlines the next day in favour of the public in a positive manner. But they failed to do so for narrow gains. Now they carry the blame for wasting Parliament's time and money.

They should have participated in the discussions on the various bills introduced by the Government. For reasons best known to them, they compromised in favour of a political stance apparently for electoral gains and only participated fully in the 127th Constitutional amendment bill.

Because of the lack of Opposition's maturity, the ruling party gained brownie points taking full advantage in skirting over critical matters for discussion. In the midst of all the ruckus, the Government introduced 15 bills and all were passed without discussion in the same session, excepting the 127th Amendment bill. Strangely, in the 17th Lok Sabha 70% of the

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Bills introduced were passed in the same session. This is very high compared to the previous 15th and 16th Lok Sabha.

In a democratic process, any proposed legislation needs to be scrutinized thoroughly and debated well before its passage in the house. According to a Senior Member of Parliament, draft legislations prepared by the concerned bureaucrats, often are not in tune with the ground realities and they need to be thoroughly discussed by the MPs, both in the Standing Committees and in the Houses. Then only these bills are fine-tuned with public interests and pass muster of a judicial scrutiny.

Another MP, who also chose to remain anonymous, claimed that the present Government does not refer the Bills to the Standing Committees and pass them without in-depth discussions. During the 14th and 15th Lok Sabha (UPA Government), 60 to 70 percent of the Bills were referred to the Standing Committees. The NDA Government referred only

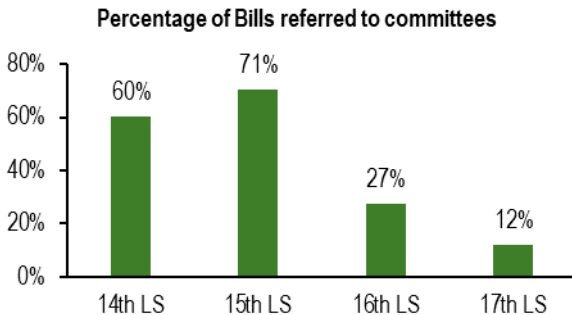
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27% of the bills in the 16th Lok Sabha and 12% in the current 17th Lok Sabha to the standing committees.

Standing Committees with Members from all parties discuss the draft legislations in detail (media is not privy to such discussions)

and also get the views of domain experts. They take the consensus view on the bills and present their report to the Parliament.

Based on the Committee's Reports, both the Houses discuss thoroughly and fine tune the draft legislation.



This democratic exercise is absolutely essential to avoid protests later and any legal scrutiny.

The amendment to legislation on labour was passed by both the Houses. Accepted by all, though there were muted protests. This bill was thoroughly scrutinised by the Standing Committee on Labour and then presented to Parliament. Hence this sensitive bill with lot of reforms has been generally accepted.

On the other hand, the Farm bills, over which there was nationwide protest by a section of the farmers, were passed without reference to the Standing Committee. The legislations are now facing the imponderable and have come under legal scrutiny. Had the Government referred the Farm bills to the Standing Committee and then got them approved through a consensus, such problems could have been avoided, political observers point out.

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Expressing concern over the lack of debate in Parliament and state legislatures, the Chief Justice of India NV Ramana said it is a "sorry state of affairs" as the absence of quality debate leaves many aspects of laws unclear and increases the burden on courts. He said that an elaborate discussion during the law-making process reduces litigation as when courts interpret them, "we all knew the intent of the legislature".

Another issue is the delay in electing the Deputy Speaker for Lok Sabha, opposition MP's say. Normally the Deputy Speaker is elected within a month of the new Lok Sabha. Unfortunately, even after 27 months, (longest in 75 years of parliamentary democracy), the government has not taken any initiative to elect a Deputy Speaker.



The unruly behaviour of a Rajya Sabha Member by climbing on the Table in the well of the House and throwing rule book on the Chair makes every Indian to hang his/her head in shame. This speaks of the poor quality of the Members nominated by the Political parties. While 90 to 95 percent of the Members observe decorum in presenting their view points,

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a section of the MP's, apparently with the blessings of their party leaders indulge in unruly behaviour, to impress them denying an opportunity to MPs, observing parliamentary protocols, to raise issues so relevant to national interests.

Suggestions

Both Ruling and Opposition parties should stop the "Blame Game" in peoples' interests, especially in the interests of the constituency people who elected them. Senior party leaders on either side should sit and find a solution across the table and thus avoid such unruly scenes in parliament, which does not project a good image of MPs both within the country and outside. Youngsters get a wrong message about Parliament and its MPs or how democracy is run from such unruly behaviour. Definitely avoidable. Due to the spread of Covid, Parliament could not run on the scheduled timelines.

Time for Proactive Decisions

New Rules have to be framed to prevent Members from indulging in unruly behaviour and they should not only be barred from the rest of the Session but also be subject to a salary cut. Daily allowances and privileges, to which MPs are entitled, should be denied. Penalties of heavy fines should be imposed on them, as parliamentary records show crores of rupees of public money have been wasted in such disruption of parliamentary proceedings skipping in-depth discussion on relevant issues of public interest. Sadly, political parties do not condemn such misbehaviour inside the House. Unfortunately, we do not have Opposition leaders strong enough in stature to stand up to speak against such unruly behaviour of some MPs. Strong stature of party leaders would invite admiration and serve as a role model for young MPs. Both Ruling and Opposition parties should respect the Institutions of Parliamentary Democracy and should not take them for granted.

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The Civil Society expects a new era at least from the Winter Session 2021, keeping the common man in mind, instead of the impending assembly elections for electoral gains.

Let us remember what Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said:

"Democracy means tolerance, not merely of those who agree with us, but of those who do not agree with us. With all my admiration and love for democracy, I am not prepared to accept the statement that the largest number of people are always right".

Graphics courtesy: PRS India

Repeal of Farm Laws – Lessons to be Learnt

By Prime Point. Srinivasan, Managing Editor (Nov 2021)

The entire country was taken by surprise when Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the repeal of three Farm Laws on 19th November 2021 in a public broadcast. The three Farm Laws were promulgated through a Presidential Ordinance in June 2020 and later introduced in the Parliament in September 2020. Both the Houses of Parliament discussed and passed the three Bills together for a limited number of hours. President gave the assent to these Bills within a week. Probably, this is the first time in Indian history that an active law signed by the President is withdrawn within a short time, even before implementation. The repeal was passed without discussion on 29th Nov 2021, the first day of the Winter Session.



Farmers' protest

The major opposition parties have also included the concept of Agricultural Reforms in their respective manifestoes, but the way in which the Government pushed these Farm Laws hurriedly raised lot of suspicion in the minds of Farmers and opposition leaders. The Farmers of Punjab, Haryana and part of UP went on dharna protesting against the law from 26th November 2020. They are continuing the protest till date on the borders of Delhi, braving the extreme climate. The political leaders were allowed to meet the Farmers to give their support, but they were not allowed to bring their political flags.

The farmers and the opposition leaders allege that the Government did not consult any of them before promulgating the ordinance and even later when they introduced the Bill in the Parliament. Despite the Government justifying the importance and the benefits of the Farm Laws, the Farmers continued their protest without break. Meanwhile, it is reported that more than 700 farmers died in the protest.

Seven State Assemblies ruled by Opposition parties passed resolutions demanding the repeal of the Farm Laws. Even after the Supreme Court had stayed the Farm Laws and appointed a committee to examine the Law, the Farmers did not withdraw the protest and continued their agitation. The union minister for Agriculture and officials held 11 rounds of talks with farmers without finding any solution.

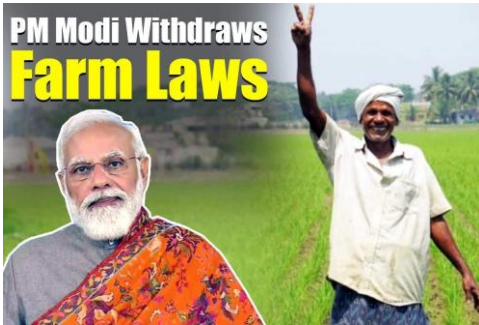
The Government alleged that anti-national elements and Khalistanis have penetrated into the farmers' protest with an ulterior motive. The Government also alleged that only the brokers were protesting, not the real farmers. Meanwhile, farmers across the country had feelings as to why the Government pushed the Farm Laws in a hurry, and they also started suspecting whether the Government wanted to favor big corporate houses.

PM's announcement

Since the farmers were adamant and opposition parties were also protesting, the Prime Minister had to announce the repeal of Farm Laws and assured the nation that he would introduce the legislative process when the Winter Session started. During his public broadcast, Modi said that the Government brought those three Bills with good intentions, but failed to convince the farmers. "Maybe something was lacking in our 'tapasya' [penance], which is why we could not convince some farmers about the laws," he said.

Thought it was an emotional speech, the farmers did not return home. They have added more demands.

Catch22 situation



Why did Modi Government get into this Catch22 situation? Time and again, your eMagazine PreSense, while appreciating various schemes introduced by Modi Government, has been pointing out the lacunae of (1) lack of

communication and disconnect with people and (2) not taking the opposition and stake holders into confidence. While reviewing the 7 years of the Modi regime, PreSense pointed out in the Editorial (June 2021 edition), based on a survey, that alarm bell was ringing. In the recent bye-poll results, the ruling party has suffered a major setback due to their lack of effective communication.

It is generally perceived that probably because of the byelection results and the ensuing 5 State Assembly Elections, Modi Government might have repealed the Farm Laws. After the announcement of the Prime Minister, this author had an informal talk with various farmers and political leaders, including the ruling party members. Though everybody agreed that the Farm Laws are needed to benefit the farmers, they did not appreciate the way it was introduced without consultation. This bill should have been handled taking the success story of GST. Probably, some 'intellectual think tank' might have misled the Government, without realising the sensibilities of the subject.

According to our Constitution, Agriculture is in the Concurrent List. That means, both the State and the Centre have the powers to enact the law. In view of this, Modi Government should have convened a meeting of the Agriculture Ministers

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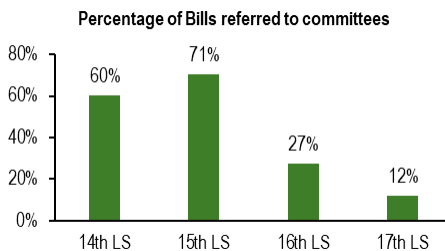
of all the States and the Farmers representatives for a detailed discussion. The farmers in each State have different challenges. Instead, the Government introduced the Farm Laws through Ordinance route, without consulting the State Governments and the Farmers.

Even when the Bill was introduced in Parliament in September 2020, the opposition demanded that the Bill be referred to Standing Committee. Government hurriedly passed the Bills in both the Houses with minimal discussion and got the assent of the President within a week. The hurry of the Government created a suspicion in the minds of all farmers and opposition leaders whether the Government was in a hurry to favour a few big corporate houses. As Prime Minister himself agreed, the Government could not convince the farmers, in spite of several rounds of talks with the Minister and officials.

Everybody knows that the Ministers and officials do not have enough powers to promise anything to farmers. Instead, Prime Minister himself should have invited the Farmer Leaders and listened to them patiently. That would have solved more than 90 percent of the misunderstanding. Chest beating, Trumpeting and blaming caused more irritation to the protesting farmers.

Lessons to be learnt

1. Right from the beginning in 2014, there is a perception among the people that the Government never cared for the public opinion or the views of the opposition. Though such an approach might have yielded success in some cases, it is not a



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desirable one in a democracy. Government should start consulting the stakeholders in future.

2. In a Parliamentary democracy, Standing Committees have been set up to discuss the Bills thoroughly and to improve upon them. Unfortunately, during the 16th and 17th Lok Sabha, the Bills were not referred to Parliamentary committees for vetting. Had these three Farm Bills been referred to the Committees, they would have improved the Bills and the country would not have faced this situation.
3. Of late, there is a general feeling among the people that the Government and the ruling party do not have connectivity with the public. This phenomenon is seen more often than not in the 17th Lok Sabha. Also the irresponsible behaviour of Opposition parties causes concern.

The Prime Minister should review the situation internally and take remedial action.

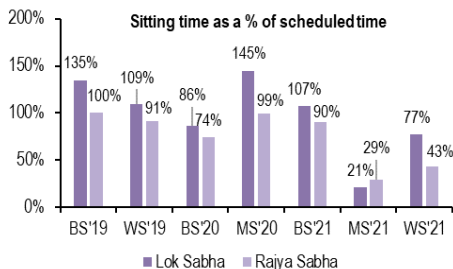
Winter Session 2021 of Indian Parliament: A Quick Review

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Mg. Editor (Dec 2021)

The winter session of Parliament (7th Session of 17th Lok Sabha) was held from November 29, 2021 to December 22, 2021. Parliament was adjourned one day ahead of schedule, having sat for 18 days. On the first day, 12 MPs were suspended from Rajya Sabha for not observing parliamentary conduct on the last day of the Monsoon Session 2021. On the penultimate day of the session, another Rajya Sabha MP was suspended for disorderly conduct.

Productivity

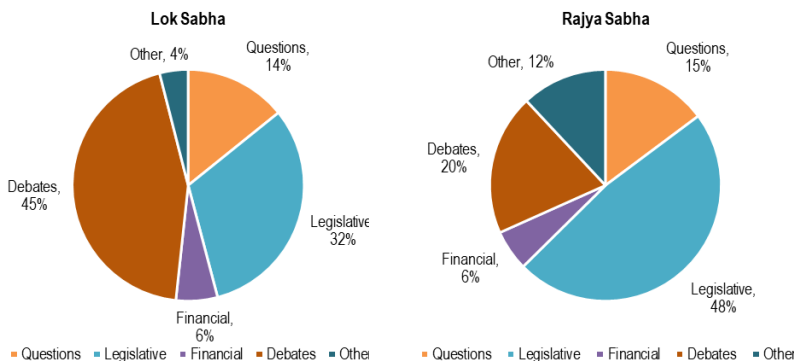
- Lok Sabha worked for 77% of its scheduled time, while Rajya Sabha worked for 43%.
- On November 29, 2021, Lok Sabha sat for over 12 hours which included a discussion on COVID-19. Rajya Sabha's longest sitting was for over five hours; this is less than the daily schedule of six hours.
- In the 17th Lok Sabha so far, Lok Sabha has worked for 99% of scheduled time, while Rajya Sabha has worked for 76% of scheduled time.
- Note that, scheduled time implies scheduled hours for actual days of sitting.



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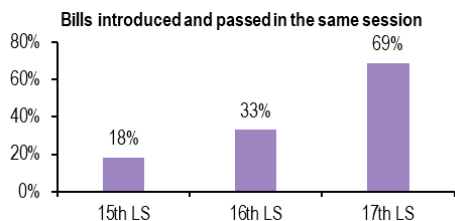
Percentage of time spent for business

- Lok Sabha spent 32% of the time on legislation, 45% on debates and 14% on questions.
- Rajya Sabha spent 48% on legislation, 20% on debates and 15% on questions.



Bills introduced and passed

- During this session, 12 Bills were introduced (excluding Appropriation Bills). Ten Bills were passed, of which six had been introduced in this session. These include the Farm Laws Repeal Bill, 2021, and the Election Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2021. Bills pending from previous sessions that were passed in this session include the Dam Safety Bill, 2019, and the Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2019.
- Four Bills were referred to Committees including the Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021 and

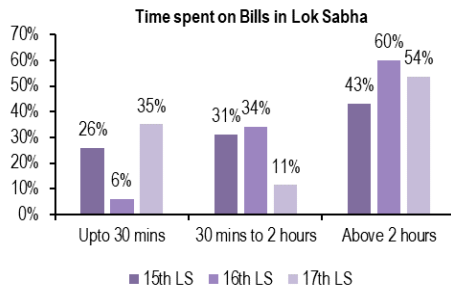


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the Mediation Bill, 2021. In the current Lok Sabha, only 13% of the Bills have been referred to Committees. This is much lower than the last three Lok Sabhas.

Time Spent on Bills

- This session, Lok Sabha spent 32% of its sitting time on legislative business, while Rajya Sabha spent 48% of its time. On an average, Lok Sabha discussed a Bill for over two and a half hours before passing it, and Rajya Sabha for two hours.
- The Farm Laws Repeal Bill, 2021 was passed on the first day in both Houses in less than 10 minutes without discussion. The Election Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2021 was passed within three hours of its introduction in Lok Sabha.
- Lok Sabha spent nearly five hours discussing and passing the second supplementary budget (8.6% of the 2021-22 budget estimate).

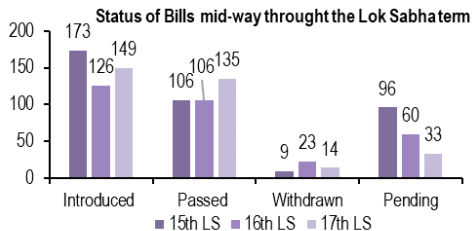


Status of Bills

- We look at the legislative business done mid-way through the 15th, 16th and 17th Lok Sabhas. The current Lok Sabha has passed more Bills in this time period in comparison to the previous two Lok Sabhas. Note that 69% of the Bills passed in this Lok Sabha were introduced in the same session.
- The current Lok Sabha has the lowest number of Bills pending at the mid-way mark. About a third of these Bills

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were introduced during the 17th Lok Sabha; the rest were carried forward from the last Parliament.



Questions

- During this session, in Lok Sabha, Question Hour functioned for 66% of the scheduled time and 26% questions were answered orally. On two days, no questions were answered orally in Lok Sabha.
- In Rajya Sabha, Question Hour functioned for 38% of the scheduled time and 21% questions were answered orally. On eight days, no questions were answered orally in Rajya Sabha.

General discussions (Non legislative business)

- More than 19 hours in Lok Sabha and one hour in Rajya Sabha were spent on non-legislative debates during this session. The topics discussed include climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic. Parliament spent 16% of its sitting time on such discussions.
- During the session, discussion on COVID-19 was conducted twice. Lok Sabha discussed management of the pandemic, and Rajya Sabha discussed the new variant Omicron. Across both Houses, there have been nine discussions on COVID-19 since the pandemic was declared in March 2020. Note that a discussion on price rise was listed but not conducted in either House.
- In the discussion on COVID-19 in Lok Sabha 97 Members participated and the discussion was held for 12 hours and 27 minutes.

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- In the discussion on Climate Change, 90 Members participated and the discussion was held for 6 hours and 26 minutes.

Election of Deputy Speaker not held even after two and half years

- Article 93 of the Constitution states that Lok Sabha will choose two Members of the House to be Speaker and Deputy Speaker at the earliest possible.
- In the 17th Lok Sabha, election for the post of Deputy Speaker has not been conducted after two and a half years since it first convened. There has just been one instance in the past – 269 days during the 12th Lok Sabha – when it took over three months to elect a Deputy Speaker.

Top Performers

Top Performers of 17th Lok Sabha (from the first sitting till the end of Winter Session 2021) - Cumulative performance

Name	Initiated debates	Private Members Bills	Questions	Total	Attendance %
Ms Supriya Sule (Maharashtra)	110	7	383	500	91
Mr Shrirang Appa Barne (Maharashtra)	48	7	385	440	96
Mr Bidyut Baran Mahato (Jharkhand)	43	0	389	432	82

Data courtesy: PRS India

The toppers Ms Supriya Sule and Mr Shrirang Appa Barne (both Members from Maharashtra) are Sansad Maha Ratna Awardees of the 16th Lok Sabha. Congratulations to all the top performers.

Data and Graphics Source courtesy: PRS India

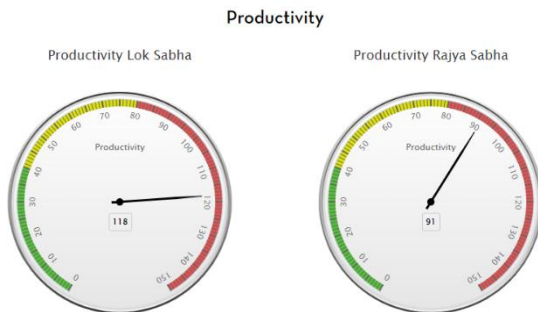
www.prsindia.org

Appreciating Parliamentarians for the First Part of Budget Session 2022

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Mg. Editor (Feb 2022)

The 7th Session of the 17th Lok Sabha (Budget Session 2022 – Part one) was one of the most productive Sessions of this Lok Sabha, and the entire Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha functioned without much noticeable disruption. The Session started with the President's Address to the joint session of Members of both Houses on 31st Jan 2022, followed by the presentation of the Economic Survey and Regular Budget for 2022-23. Part one of the Session was adjourned on 11th Feb 2022. The Parliament will again meet on 14th March 2022 for the second part to continue the Budget discussions. Common man expects that the Budget to be discussed thoroughly without disruption, to avoid the budget being passed by voice vote in a hurry.

It is quite heartening to note that the Lok Sabha's productivity was 118% and that of the Rajya Sabha's was 91%. Lok Sabha functioned for 49.3 hours, and Rajya Sabha for 36.8 hours. Both houses spent nearly 15% of the Parliament time in Question Hour. This is a good trend.



Graphics courtesy: PRS India

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PreSense always insists that Question Hour and Zero Hour belong to the common man, who has elected the Members. Only during these hours can the Members take up many serious local issues for a solution. In recent years, Parliamentarians have developed a trend of asking for adjournment of Questions and Zero Hours, citing some reasons, which could be discussed during regular business hours. If the Chair does not accept, they disrupt the Parliament and force the Chair to adjourn the session without any business. This is a bad trend and against the interest of the people. If the political parties want to discuss any serious issue, there are many ways to draw the attention. Sadly, the Members seek adjournment of Question and Zero Hours citing State-level issues.

In the last concluded session, the Hon'ble Speaker mentioned the indecent behaviour of some members. The leaders of all the parties assured the good behaviour of their members. There are many role-model MPs in our Parliament, cutting across party lines. Only a handful of members indulge in such a disruptive mode to gain publicity and draw the attention of their party leadership. These members send a wrong signal to the youth, bringing a bad image even to good-looking MPs. Senior party leaders should not encourage such unholy behaviour of their members in the House, which is treated as the temple of democracy.

If the Members want to protest the Government, they can work beyond the hours and bring all the government's deficiencies to the fore. This way, they will be doing a great service to the democracy and parliamentary system.

PreSense humbly requests that all Members allow Question and Zero Hour without disruption.

Disruption of Question and Zero Hours is against the Interest of the Common Man

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Mg. Editor (March 2022)

The 12th edition of Sansad Ratna Awards presentation ceremony was held in Delhi on 26th March 2022. Nine Parliamentarians, four standing committees and two veteran leaders were honoured for their performance in person. Sansad Ratna Awards are presented on behalf of Civil Society by Prime Point Foundation and your eMagazine PreSense since 2010. An eminent Jury Committee Chaired by Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal (Hon'ble MoS Parliamentary Affairs) and Co-Chaired by Shri T S Krishnamurthy (Former Chief Election Commissioner of India) selects the Awardees based on the performance data provided by PRS India.

Every year, during the event, we come out with two important suggestions for consideration by the Government and the Parliamentarians. This year we made two important appeals to the Government and to the Parliamentarians for consideration.

Do not disturb Question Hour and Zero Hour

In both the Houses of Parliament, Question Hour and Zero Hour are meant for taking up important issues relating to common men and constituency. Though 20 Questions are listed in the Lok Sabha and 15 in Rajya Sabha for oral answers by the Ministers during Question Hour as Starred Questions, hardly 5 to 6 Questions are answered. When starred Questions are taken up, the Members can raise supplementary Questions and grill the Ministers. 200 Unstarred Questions are answered by the Ministers in writing.

During the Zero Hour, all the important issues relating to constituency and State that are affecting the common people

in the region can be taken up. Unfortunately, we find that most of the time, the opposition parties submit notices to the Speaker seeking adjournment of the Question Hour and Zero Hour to discuss their agenda for their political reasons. If the Speaker or the Chairman does not adjourn, some of the Hon'ble Members make noise during these hours disturbing the proceedings. Many times, due to the disruption, Question Hours and Zeros Hours are getting cancelled. In a way, this gives an advantage to the Treasury benches and Ministers to avoid supplementary questions. In our view, it is a denial of the right of the common people, who have elected the Hon'ble Members, to discuss the important issues concerning them. Also, this deprives the information and benefits to the common people.

During the Sansad Ratna event 2022, we emphasized that such disruptions or adjournments of Question and Zero Hours were against the interest of the common people and we appealed to the Hon'ble Members to desist from disrupting these two important hours. In fact, we made an appeal that Question Hour should be increased in both the Houses from the existing one hour to two hours, so that more number of questions can be answered orally by the Ministers in the House.

Increase the working days of the Parliament

Between 1952 and 1972, the Indian Parliament functioned for 120 days a year on average. Presently, the Parliament works only for around 60 days per year. Around 25% of the working time gets lost due to disruptions. On average, the Indian Parliament functions only 45 to 50 days yearly. We have also seen some Sessions getting washed out without doing any business.

Many of the bills get passed without discussion or in less than 30 minutes. 75 percent of the Budget proposals get passed

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without discussions and guillotined. Sadly, the bills are also not sent to the Standing Committees by the Government for better scrutiny. Only 13% of the bills were referred to Standing Committees during this 17th Lok Sabha. In the current 17th Lok Sabha, the attendance in the Standing Committees is getting reduced session by session. Last year, then Chief Justice of India also remarked about the lack of discussions on the bills in the Parliament, adding burden to the Courts for further scrutiny. Hon'ble Members have been elected by the voters to effectively participate in the proceedings of the Parliament and the Standing Committees and not to cause disruptions in the functioning of the Parliament.

The working days of the State Legislatures are also causing concern. On average, our State Assemblies function around 20 to 30 days per year.

In the United Kingdom, the Parliament sits for 150 days every year. In Germany, it sits for 105 to 110 days. With 1.3 billion people in India and complex problems, it is not in the interest of common people if the Parliament sits only for 60 days on average every year, that too subject to various disruptions.

During the Sansad Ratna event, on behalf of PreSense and Prime Point Foundation, we appealed to the Government of India and to the Hon'ble Members of Parliament to consider increasing the Parliament working days to a minimum of 120 to 150 days.

India is the world's largest democracy. However, we cannot boast of an effective democracy unless the parliamentary system functions effectively.

Review of Parliament Proceedings: Budget Session 2022

Srinivasa Gopal, Editorial Team (March 2022)

The 8th Session of the 17th Lok Sabha began with the address of the Hon'ble President on 31st Jan 2022 to the Members of both Houses. The Finance Minister presented the FY 2022-23 Budget on 1st Feb. The Budget Session was held in two parts and was adjourned since-die on 7th April 2022, one day before the scheduled time. Both the Houses sat for 27 days during this Session.

Productivity

PreSense Congratulates all the political parties and their MPs for running both Houses without much disruption. Lok Sabha registered 123% productivity, while Rajya Sabha registered 99%.

Questions

During the Question Hour, Ministers answered orally 182 starred questions in Lok Sabha and 141 in Rajya Sabha. The Question Hour functioned for 89% of its scheduled time in Lok Sabha and 76% in Rajya Sabha.

Legislative business and Debates

This Budget Session was one of the most productive Sessions. 142 Members of Lok Sabha and 43 Members of Rajya Sabha participated in the Budget discussions.

Seven Bills were introduced in the session (excluding the Appropriation and Finance Bills). This is less than half of the average of 15 Bills introduced across budget sessions since

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2009. Five Bills were passed, of which one was pending from the previous session (the Chartered Accountants Bill). Other Bills passed include the Criminal Procedure (Identification) Bill, 2022, and the Delhi Municipal Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2022.

During the three years of this Lok Sabha, 134 Bills have been introduced, of which 114 have been passed and six withdrawn. At the end of this session, 35 bills remain pending. Of these, 21 were introduced before the start of the current Lok Sabha (in June 2019), the oldest being from 1992.

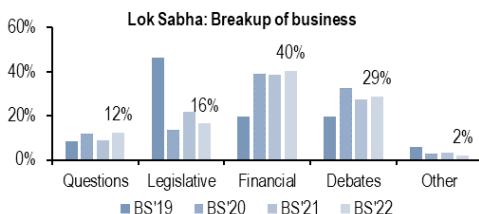
None of the Bills introduced in this session were referred to Parliamentary Committees. In the current Lok Sabha, only 13% of the Bills have been referred to Committees. This is much lower than the last three Lok Sabhas. For instance, in the 15th LS, 71% of the Bills were referred to Committees, while 27% of the Bills were referred to Committees in the 16th LS.

How did both the Houses spend their time?

Lok Sabha spent most of its time on financial matters; Rajya Sabha on debates

In Lok Sabha, financial matters were discussed for 40% of the total sitting time. Rajya Sabha spent 18% of its time discussing the working of four Ministries: (i) Development of North-Eastern Region, (ii) Tribal Affairs, (iii) Railways, and (iv) Labour and Employment. Further, it spent around 10% of its time on Motion of thanks to the President's Address.

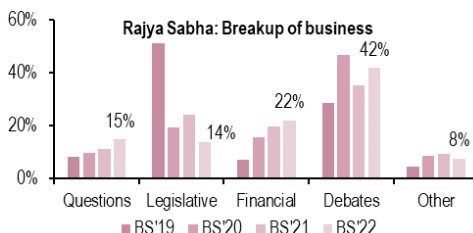
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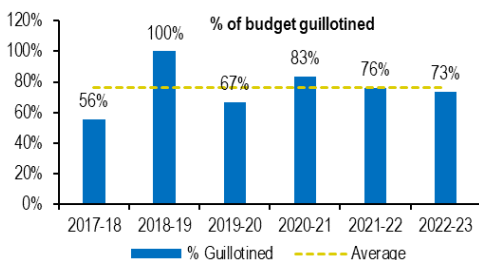
On an average, across the last four budget sessions, Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha have spent 22% of their sitting time on legislative business. This session, both Houses spent lesser

share of their time on legislative business.

Lok Sabha takes up discussions on issues of public importance under Rule 193. This session, the House discussed the situation in Ukraine and the need to promote sports in India. Further, the discussion on climate change (which commenced in Winter Session 2021) was concluded. Rajya Sabha did not have any such discussion in this session.



73% of the budget was passed without discussion



Lok Sabha discussed the expenditure budget of five Ministries, including Railways and Road Transport. These constitute 27% of the total voted expenditure. The remaining 73% of the voted expenditure

was passed without discussion. In the past six years, on average, 76% of the budget has been passed without discussion in Lok Sabha.

Deputy Speaker not elected for 17th Lok Sabha

Article 93 of the Constitution states that Lok Sabha will choose two Members of the House to be Speaker and Deputy Speaker as soon as possible. In the 17th Lok Sabha, election for the post of Deputy Speaker has not been conducted after nearly three years since it first convened.

Source: PRS India

Interesting Unknown Facts While Introducing Bills in Parliament + Powers of the Governor

By Srinivas Prabhu, Retired Joint Secretary, Lok Sabha, Delhi (April 2022)

Procedures for introducing a Bill in the Parliament. An interesting episode while presenting the Budget by Indira Gandhi

The main function of the Parliament is 'Legislation'. There are two types. Government bills are piloted by the Ministers and the Private Members Bills are piloted by any member, other than Ministers. For tabling a bill of either type, the Minister or Member has to give notice to the Speaker of the Lok Sabha or Chairman of the Rajya Sabha. Hon'ble Speaker or Chairman examines the bill and then includes it in the List of Business of the day.

When the turn comes for the introduction of the bill, the concerned Minister raises from the seat and seeks the leave of the House to introduce the bill. Immediately, the Speaker puts the question before the House. "Whether the leave is granted to the Minister to introduce the Bill. Those in favour may say Ayes and those who are against may say Noes." Usually, this is decided by the Voice vote, unless some controversial bills are introduced. Once the permission is granted by the House, Speaker will say "The Leave is granted. Now the Minister may introduce the Bill". At this stage, the Minister will stand up again and say, "*I introduce the Bill*". After Minister introduces the bill, it becomes the property of the House. This procedure is highly important to make the bill and Act legal.

Once the bill is passed in the Lok Sabha, it will be transmitted to the Rajya Sabha. After being passed by both the Houses,

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the President will give assent and the bill comes into effect. The bill becomes an Act only after President's assent. Government bills (other than Finance bills) can be introduced in either of the House. After getting passed by one House, the bill will be transmitted to the other House for discussion and passing.

Procedures are slightly different for Finance Bills. When the Finance Bill (Budget proposals) is introduced by the Finance Minister in the Lok Sabha, some of the tax proposals like custom duty, excise duty, etc. come into effect from the midnight of the day on which the bill gets introduced.

Until 1999, the Union Budget was presented at 5 pm on the last working day of February, inheriting the British legacy. From 1999, the time was changed to 11 am. Since 2016, the Budget is presented on the 1st of February every year at 11 am in India.

On 28th February 1970, Indira Gandhi, then Prime Minister and Finance Minister after presenting the Budget moved the motion seeking permission from the House to introduce the Bill. The motion was put to vote by Speaker G S Dhillon. The motion was opposed by some members. The motion was adopted. Because of the commotion and interruption, the Speaker adjourned the House till 11 AM the next working day, before Indira Gandhi formally introduced the Finance Bill. Stenographers used to record the proceedings.

Later some members drew the attention of the Speaker in his chamber that according to the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act 1931, the taxes could not be collected from the midnight of the day, as the bill was not formally introduced in the House.



They also pointed out that any collection of taxes from midnight would become illegal and would be challenged in the Supreme Court. Further, it would create more economic mess. Immediately, Speaker ordered that House to be re-convened at 10 pm on the same day to enable the PM to introduce the bill. All the Members were informed through All India Radio, Special Bulletin Part 2 and over the telephone. The House re-assembled at 10 pm and after a brief discussion, Indira Gandhi formally said, "*I introduce the Bill*". Thus, they averted a great constitutional crisis. The House got adjourned at 10.55 pm till 11 am on 2nd March 1970.

In the Parliamentary system, procedures are very important.

What are the Powers of the Governor for bills presented to him?

Recently, the Media has discussed the governor's powers when bills are presented to him for assent. According to Articles 200 and 201 of the Indian Constitution, the Governor has three options.

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1. He can give assent to the bill
2. He can withhold. No time limit.
3. He can forward the bill for the consideration of the President.

He can return the bill to the Speaker for reconsideration. If the State Assembly passes again and submits it to the Governor, he can either give his assent or reserve the bill for the president's consideration.

The same rule applies to the President also. When Giani Zail Singh was the President during Rajiv Gandhi's tenure, a bill known as the Indian Telegraph Amendment Bill, passed by both Houses of Parliament, was sent to the President for assent. The president did not give assent. He kept it pending. Every time the Government approached the President, he responded that he was examining the bill. Since the assent was not given by the President, the next Government withdrew the bill in the Parliament. Without the assent of the President or Governor, no bill can become an Act. According to the Constitution, they have no time limit for decisions. They have to make decisions according to Constitutional provisions.

Performance of Members, States in the 17th Lok Sabha – An Interesting Analysis

By Srinivas Gopal, Editorial Team (April 2022)

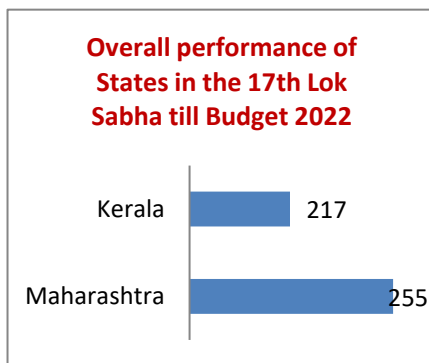
The 8th Session of the 17th Lok Sabha began with the address of the Hon'ble President on 31st Jan 2022 to the Members of both the Houses. The Finance Minister presented the Budget for FY 2022-23 on 1st Feb. The Budget Session was held in two parts and was adjourned sine-die on 7th April 2022, one day before the scheduled time. Both the Houses sat for 27 days during this Session. In the March 2022 edition of PreSense, we brought out the various aspects of performance of the Budget Session 2022.

In this edition, we will analyse the various aspects of the performance of MPs in the 17th Lok Sabha from the first sitting (June 2019) till the end of Budget Session 2022. Data courtesy: PRS India.

Performance of States

Under the 'Initiated Debates' category, Kerala and Rajasthan have shown better performance. Kerala's per member average in participation of debates is 48.8 and that of Rajasthan is 43.2. National Average is 21.3.

Under 'Private Members Bills, Maharashtra Members have introduced 77 Private Members Bills in this 17th Lok Sabha and Uttar Pradesh Members have introduced 53 bills. Kerala Members have



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introduced 51 Bills. During this 17th Lok Sabha 445 Bills have been introduced. These three States have introduced 41% of the Private Members Bills.

Under the Questions category, Maharashtra Members have scored an average of 233 per member, while Rajasthan and Kerala have scored 173 and 166 respectively. The National average is 122 per member.

Under the total Average of Initiated debates, Private Member's Bills and Questions, Maharashtra and Kerala have scored more than 200 points.

Performance of Individuals

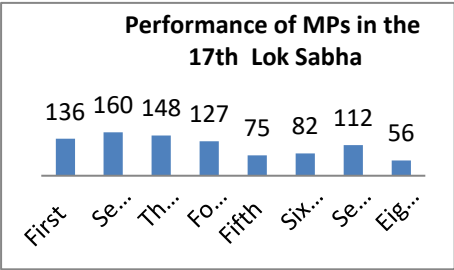
In the current 17th Lok Sabha, Smt. Supriya Sule (NCP, Maharashtra) continues to maintain the lead with an overall tally of initiated debates, private member's bills and questions. She has secured 569 points with 93% attendance. It may be recalled that she is the recipient of the Sansad Maha Ratna Award for the 16th Lok Sabha and the Sansad Vishisht Ratna Award for 17th Lok Sabha. These awards are instituted by this eMagazine PreSense and Prime Point Foundation.

Sri Shrirang Appa Barne (Shiv Sena, Maharashtra) and Shri Bidyut Baran Mahato (BJP, Jharkhand) have secured the second and third positions with 501 and 491 points. Shri Shrirang Appa Barne also received the Sansad Maha Ratna Award for the 16th Lok Sabha and the Sansad Vishisht Ratna Award for the 17th Lok Sabha. Shri Bidyut Baran Mahato is a Sansad Ratna Awardee for the 17th Lok Sabha.

Performance of Members Term wise

We analysed the performance of all the Members according to their term, first or second, etc. The figures indicate the per member average of the total of initiated debates, private members bills and questions. The National Average per member is 140 points.

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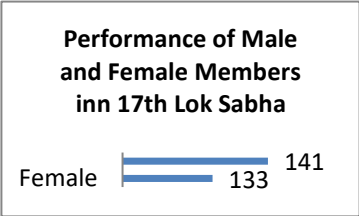


From the chart, you will observe that the second term, third term and first term members have been performing better. In the current 17th Lok Sabha, we have 274 First time MPs, 154 Second time MPs and 54 Third

time MPs . The performance of Second time MPs needs to be noted.

Performance of Members Gender wise

17th Lok Sabha has 81 women MPs. We analysed the performance of Male and Female MPs based on the total tally of initiated debates, private members' bills, and questions.



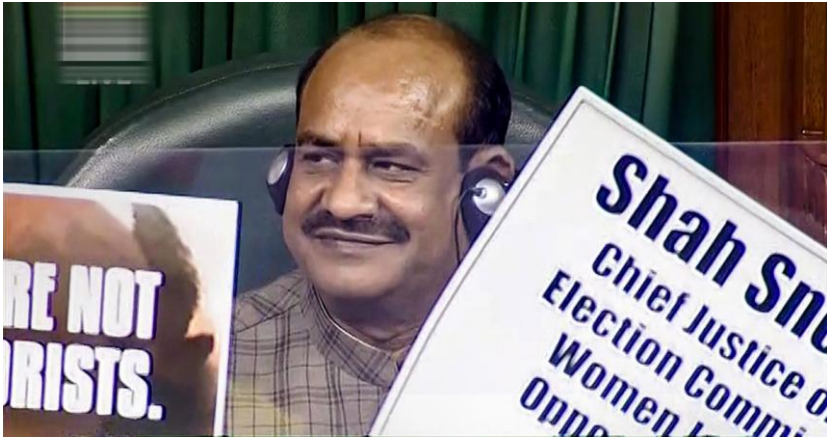
Women Members have scored an average of 130 points. Political parties should encourage women Members to participate more in the proceedings.

PreSense Congratulates all the performers.

Data courtesy: PRS India

Political parties Should Respect the Institution of Parliamentary Democracy

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Mg. Editor (August 2022)



While the Nation was preparing to celebrate the 75th Anniversary of our Indian Independence, some of the political parties caused disappointment to the Nation by disrupting the Monsoon Session of the Parliament in August this year. While the nation is proud of being the largest democracy in the world, a section of Parliamentarians shamed India for their unparliamentary behaviour for their selfish interest.

Low Productivity due to disruption is against the interest of the Nation

The Monsoon Session ended as a complete washout without taking up many of the burning issues facing the nation. The productivity of the Lok Sabha was 47%, and that of the Rajya Sabha was 42%. Sadly, the productivity of the Question Hour was the lowest, at 12.1% in the Lok Sabha and 18.2% in the Rajya Sabha. That means both the Houses did not give much

importance to the Question Hour, where the real issues of the people are brought out.

The entire country elects the Members of Parliament to discuss and to take up the issues facing the Constituency and the Nation. Generally, in our view more than 90% of the Members want to take up their job seriously and sincerely. They want to participate in the discussions and to raise important issues. Unfortunately, a handful of members belonging to some political parties for their own selfish reasons and to gain political mileage, disrupt the proceedings. They rush to the well of the House and shout slogans, display banners on the face of the Speaker and indulge in various activities against the rules of the House. They don't realise the negative impact, it may create on the students and youngsters watching the proceedings live.

The sittings are forcefully adjourned without doing any business. When all the political parties have enough opportunities to discuss all the issues, even sitting late, in both the Houses of the Parliament, it is highly unfortunate that the floor leaders of some of the parties encourage disruption, instead of getting time allotted through Business Advisory Committee.

The unruly behaviour of some Members of Parliament in disrupting the House has led to frustration among many citizens. PreSense has pointed out several times in the past that disruption of the House is against the interests of the Nation and the citizens.

Punish the disrupters

Before writing this Editorial, we spoke to many concerned citizens. Everybody uniformly agrees that the Speaker should punish the Members who disrupt the House. If few Members disrupt the House, many serious Members are unable to utilise the Parliament time for the benefit of the people. If some Members continuously indulge in disrupting the House, shout

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slogans in the well and display banners hiding the face of the Speaker, they should be suspended for the Session, besides withdrawing all the allowances and travel charges. Their privileges also should be withdrawn for specific period.



These Members cannot justify disrupting in the interest of the nation since other avenues are available for discussion. Due to disruption, many important Private Members' Bills do not get introduced or debated on Fridays. The party leaders and floor leaders should not encourage such anti-people disruption for their short-term gains.

Allow the Inter-Session Notices

Due to disruptions, many issues are not taken up in the Parliament. To get more participation from the Members and to address many problems of the country, the Speaker and the Government should consider accepting notices under Rule 377 and Questions online during inter-session period also. This will improve the efficiency of the Government too.

Working of Parliament and Committees

Presently, Parliament functions only for 60 to 70 days in a year. Out of this, 25 to 30 percent is wasted due to disruption.

Productive working hours are being reduced. Parliament should function for a minimum of 100 to 120 days with the least disruption. Then, only the Parliamentarians will fulfill the dreams of our freedom fighters.

Over the last five years, it has been observed that attendance at the Parliamentary Committee Meetings is very poor. Members show scant respect of interest in attending the Committee meetings. Parliamentary Committees are like 'Mini Parliament' with representation from all parties. In the past, they have contributed a lot by scrutinizing the bills and the budget presented to them. Government should motivate the Members to participate in the Committees. The Government should refer as many bills to the Committees as possible for scrutiny. This will strengthen the Committees and the quality of the bills for passage. Also, many important issues relating to individual States could not be taken up for discussion during the Parliament Sessions. The respective Committees can take up suo moto all the important matters that are not discussed in the Parliament and discuss within the Committee. The Committees have the advantage of inviting the stakeholders as witness to get the expert views.

Members do not use the Parliament library

The library in the Indian Parliament is one of the best libraries in the world. It is generally observed that only 5 to 10% of the Members utilize this facility properly to enrich knowledge and to share it during the debates. Besides, the Parliament itself is conducting training programmes for all the Members for their effective participation. Unfortunately, such facilities are not used by the Members. Even PRS India conducts seminars on various bills to educate the Members for the discussion. Only a handful of Members participate in such educative programmes.

Deputy Speaker not elected even after 3 years

Even after three years, the Government has not decided to elect the Deputy Speaker for the Lok Sabha. It is a Constitutional position, and the Deputy Speaker plays a significant role in the Parliamentary functioning. For the first time, since adopting the Constitution, the position of Deputy Speaker is lying vacant for three years. It is not a healthy one in the democracy.

Unless the ruling and opposition parties respect the Institution of Parliament, the purpose of our celebrating "*Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav*" will be lost entirely.

Indian Opposition Parties not Performing Their Roles Effectively

By Ramesh Sundaram, Consulting Editor (Oct 2022)

The recent election of Mallikarjun Kharge (80) as the President of the Indian National Congress has raised a lot of debates in the media and among people. Kharge carries a rich political and administrative experience. He has won 9 times continuously in the Karnataka State Assembly Elections and two times in Parliament elections. Now, he is a sitting member of the Rajya Sabha. He has served as Leader of the Opposition in the State Assembly and in Parliament. He was also a Cabinet Minister in the Centre. He belongs to Scheduled Caste and is respected by all parties, including the Prime Minister.

For the first time in 24 years, a leader outside the Nehru-Gandhi family (Mahatma Gandhi is not connected with this family) is taking over as the President of the Congress. In the post-independent era, except during the Narasimha Rao period, the Nehru family controlled the party and the Government whenever Congress was the ruling party, irrespective of who was the party President.

Political analysts feel that Mallikarjun Kharge may also be another Manmohan Singh 2.0 to follow the orders from the Nehru family. Only time can tell whether Kharge will act independently and wisely to strengthen the Congress party.

Challenge

The Congress party has lost its credibility among the people due to unprofessional handling by the Nehru family. It has lost even the official status of an Opposition Party in Parliament, as it has failed to secure 10% of the House

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strength. It has lost many of the State Governments, excepting Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh. The Congress also lost the Punjab Government due to wrong handling of Chief Minister issue.

Congress being the only national party with pan-India presence, technically it should lead all the opposition parties in the coming State Assembly and 2024 General Elections. It remains to be seen whether Kharge will be able to unite all the opposition parties under the leadership of the Congress. Further, over a period of 5 years, the Congress has lost many of its senior leaders like Gulam Nabi Azad, Kapil Sibal and many others. Sadly, Rahul Gandhi has also not developed enough political competency to lead the party. He is surrounded by sycophants who do not advise him politically viable strategies. Even Sonia Gandhi did not function as an effective Interim-President after the resignation of Rahul Gandhi, probably due to her health conditions and court cases. Many Congress leaders, with whom PreSense spoke, expressed their deep concern over the future of the Congress party.

Need for good opposition

For effective governance of the Government, there should be a strong and responsible opposition. Prior to 1990, the ruling Congress was strong. Rajiv Gandhi, who had 400 plus seats earlier, could not win in the subsequent elections. After Rajiv assassination, Congress formed a minority Government under Narasimha Rao in 1991. At that time, the country was facing deep economic crisis due to the poor governance and political instability of earlier Governments. Though the Narasimha Rao Government was a minority Government, the then-opposition leaders Vajpayee and Advani were highly responsible leaders and worked closely with the Government to stabilize the economy of the country. It is on record that the opposition

led by Vajpayee and Advani played a responsible role, keeping the country's interests in mind. They diligently played the role of constructive opposition to perfection. Prime Minister Narasimha Rao even deputed Vajpayee to represent India in the United Nations on Pakistan issue, a rare and the only of its kind gesture in the post-Independent India.

After Narasimha Rao's period, until 2014, the ruling parties were not strong, and they had to depend on various smaller and regional parties. This led to many scams between 2004 and 2014. These scams spoiled the Congress's image, and in 2014, the Congress lost heavily across the country. BJP got a massive mandate under Narendra Modi.

Emergence of Regional parties

The Congress was losing ground after 1990 and hence the regional parties (like DMK, AIADMK, TDP, Shiv Sena, SP, BSP, JDS, JDU, RJD, etc.) and parties founded by the leaders quitting the Congress (like TMC, NCP, YSR Congress, etc.) slowly started playing a major role in the formation of Government at the Centre. Even in the 2019 General Elections, the Congress party itself did not name Rahul Gandhi as its PM candidate. Rahul Gandhi lost even in Amethi in 2019, the constituency won by their family for decades. He resigned as the President of Congress owning moral responsibility. Sonia Gandhi held the position of 'Interim President' for three years. During this period, the party had to face lot of corruption charges and money laundering cases. This has further wrecked the party leading to important leaders leaving the party. Now after three years, in October 2022, the party has conducted the election for the post of President. Whether all opposition parties will accept the Congress as their leader in the coming elections remains to be seen.

Status of opposition parties

Though opposition parties are numerically strong, they are divided due to regional issues, personal ego, allegations of corruption, etc. Almost all parties have cases pending with CBI or ED.

Though there are plenty of issues to take on the central government, the opposition parties take up only trivial and populist issues, keeping the vote bank politics in mind. They do not take up development issues. On the other hand, they protest against many of the developmental projects for their own reasons.

For example, according to media reports, seven National Highways Projects were cancelled in a State due to non-cooperation by a State Government ruled by Opposition. One of the prestigious projects, the Neutrino research project, was stopped due to misguided protests by some political parties in Tamil Nadu. Tuticorin Sterlite Copper manufacturing unit was closed due to a protest by opposition parties, citing environmental issues. This unit was supplying copper to the entire country. Now, copper is being imported from other countries. Sometimes, knowingly or unknowingly, our opposition parties play into the hands of geopolitical sabotage against the interest of our nation.

When the Government of India banned the Popular Front of India (PFI) and its associated organisations for alleged involvement in anti-national activities, many of the opposition parties did not comment, and some of them opposed the Government's decision due to vote bank politics. On the previous night of Diwali, a blast occurred at Coimbatore, probably with the intention of repeating bomb blasts in several places. Now, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) has taken up the investigation, and many people have been

arrested for their alleged involvement in terrorist activities. Some of the arrested people seem to be the associates of the convicts of the 1998 Coimbatore blasts and the 2021 Sri Lanka blasts during Easter. Sadly, none of the leading opposition parties, including Congress, have condemned the blast by terrorists, for fear of vote bank politics.

PreSense records the constructive role being played by BJD (Odisha) in maintaining a good relationship with the Centre and focusing only on the development of the State. Navin Patnaik remains a role model Chief Minister, keeping the country's interest above that of his party. BJD Members in both Houses of Parliament use Parliament time effectively.

In Parliament, a section of the Opposition (not all parties) frequently indulges in disruption, leading to ruckus and loss of productivity. They create ruckus even for some trivial local issues.

What is the way out?

In a vibrant democracy, both ruling and opposition parties should work together keeping the interest of the country in their mind. The priority of the new Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge is to unite all the opposition parties keeping the national interest in focus. Instead of talking about trivial issues to please the vote bank, they should fight for more developmental projects.

On the part of the ruling party, PreSense feels they should respect the institution of Parliament, by taking the opposition parties into confidence before introducing the bills. They should refer the maximum number of the bills to the Standing Committees for perfection. Government should also realise that keeping the post of Deputy Speaker of Lok Sabha, a

PreSense Speaks: Review of 17th Lok Sabha

constitutional position, vacant for three years is not in the interest of democracy.

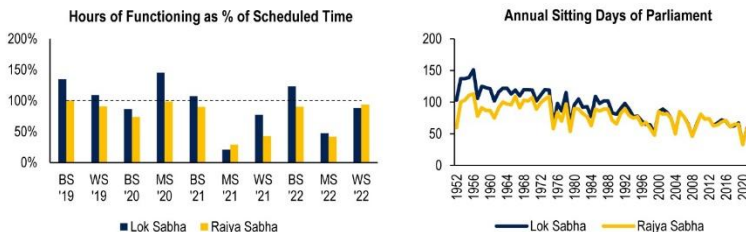
Democracy can be more effective only when the ruling and opposition parties work together, keeping the national interest at a higher level than their political and vote-bank interests.

Winter Session 2022 of Parliament - A Quick Review

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Mg. Editor (December 2022)

The Winter Session of Parliament was held from December 7, 2022 to December 23, 2022. It was adjourned sine die four working days ahead of schedule, having sat for 13 days. Parliament has had 56 sittings this year.

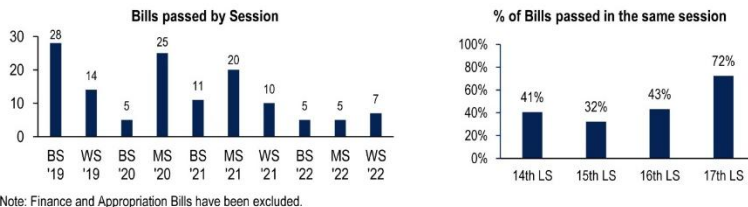
Eight out of ten sessions of the 17th Lok Sabha have adjourned early



- This has been one of the shortest sessions in the 17th Lok Sabha (the other one being Monsoon Session 2020 that was held during the Covid-19 pandemic). For the last eight consecutive sessions, Parliament has adjourned ahead of schedule. 36 planned sitting days have been lost due to early adjournment in this Lok Sabha.
- Over the last 50 years, the number of sittings of Parliament has been declining. The number of sittings has halved since the 1950s and 1960s.
- In this session, Lok Sabha functioned for 88% of scheduled time (of actual sitting days), while Rajya Sabha functioned for 94%. Both Houses saw some disruptions and repeated adjournments on the penultimate day, when opposition members wanted to raise a discussion on the India-China issue.

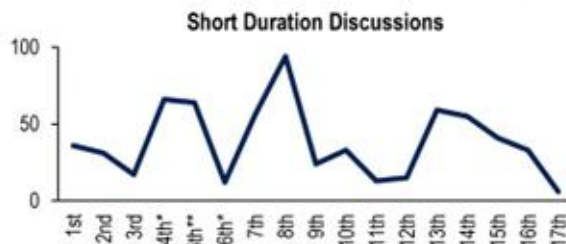
PreSense Speaks: Review of 17th Lok Sabha

Legislative activity reducing; Bills continue to be introduced and passed in the same session



- Seven Bills were passed in this session and seven were introduced. Four Bills to amend the list of Scheduled Tribes in various States were introduced, of which two were passed. Two of the Bills introduced, the Multi-State Co-operative Societies Bill, 2022, and the Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill, 2022, have been referred to Joint Parliamentary Committees.
- So far, in the 17th Lok Sabha, of the 130 Bills passed, 94 were introduced and passed in the same session. Fewer Bills are being referred to Committees for detailed scrutiny. In the current Lok Sabha, 23% of Bills introduced have been referred to Committees. This is lower than the last three Lok Sabhas: 60% in the 14th, 71% in the 15th, and 27% in the 16th Lok Sabha.
- Private Members' Bills (PMBs) are introduced by Members who are not Ministers. Since 1970, no PMB has been passed by Parliament. In this session, 90 PMBs were introduced. This included the Uniform Civil Code in India Bill, 2020, and the

There have been fewer discussions during the 17th Lok Sabha



PreSense Speaks: Review of 17th Lok Sabha

Parliament (Productivity Enhancement) Bill, 2022. The motion to introduce the Uniform Civil Code Bill was opposed and put to a recorded vote. The motion was accepted, and the Bill was subsequently introduced.

- In this session, Lok Sabha spent 4 hours and 53 minutes discussing the need to promote sports in India. This debate continued from the Budget and Monsoon Sessions of 2022. The problem of drug abuse in the country was also discussed for 7 hours and 16 minutes.
- Rajya Sabha discussed the serious effects of global warming for three hours, in light of the recently concluded COP27.
- The number of short-duration discussions (under Rule 193) initiated in Parliament has decreased over the last few Lok Sabhas. Under these, Members can raise a discussion on a matter of public importance. Other MPs can also participate in the discussion, and in the end, there is a response by the respective Minister. There were 59 such discussions in the 13th Lok Sabha, which declined to 55, 41, and 33 in the last three Lok Sabhas, and further to six in the three-and-a-half years of the current Lok Sabha.

Lok Sabha does not have a Deputy Speaker

- Article 93 of the Constitution states that Lok Sabha will choose two Members of the House to be Speaker and Deputy Speaker as soon as possible.
- In the 17th Lok Sabha, election to the post of Deputy Speaker has not been conducted even after three and a half years since it first convened. There has just been one instance in the past – 269 days during the 12th Lok Sabha – when it took over three months to elect a Deputy Speaker.

Reproduced from www.prsindia.org

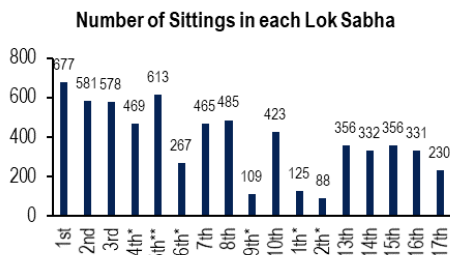
The 17th Lok Sabha is Likely to Create a Record for the Minimum Number of Sitting Days in the post-Independence Era

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Mg. Editor (April 2023)

India is celebrating the 75th Anniversary of Indian Independence, but unfortunately, the current 17th Lok Sabha will become the shortest Lok Sabha since 1952.

Entering the final year of its term, the 17th Lok Sabha has functioned for 230 sitting days only so far. Of all the Lok Sabhas, that completed the full five-year term, the 16th Lok Sabha had the lowest sitting days (331). With one more year remaining in the term and with an average of 58 sitting days per year, the 17th Lok Sabha is unlikely to sit for not more than 331 days. This could make it the shortest full-term Lok Sabha ever since 1952.

It is a matter of great concern to all the voters in India. PreSense feels that both the ruling and opposition parties have to take responsibility in running the Parliament. Both should sit together and discuss to run the Parliament smoothly in the interest of the nation. The voters in India elect the Members of Parliament with the hope that they would take up their constituency, State and national issues in the Parliament for redressal. Not running the Parliament as per schedule is not in the interest of the people.



***Note: *Term less than 5 years;
**6 year term. Figures for the
17th Lok Sabha are till the
Budget Session 2023.***

PreSense Speaks: Review of 17th Lok Sabha

Some of the political parties indulge in such disruptions and ruckus for their own political gains. Many of the MPs confess confidentially that they do come prepared for every session but are not able to take up the issues.

Budget Session 2023

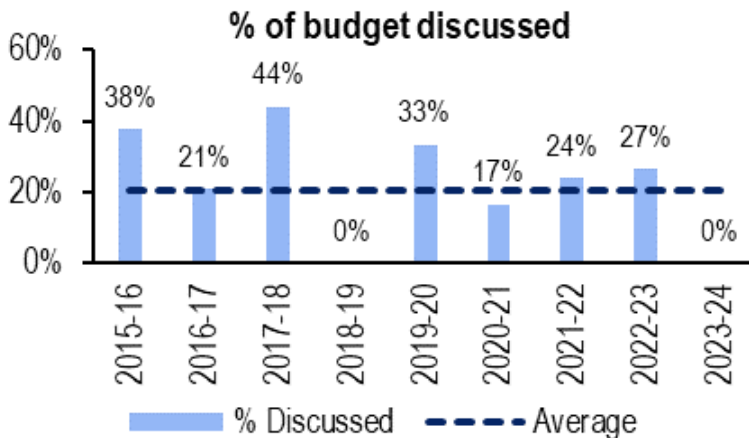
The recently concluded Budget session was held from January 31, 2023, to April 6, 2023, with a recess from February 14 to March 12. Parliament adjourned sine die on April 6, having sat for 25 days. This session saw very limited legislative activity and minimal discussion on the Budget amidst continuous disruptions. The productivity of the Lok Sabha during this Budget Session 2023 was 34%, and that of Rajya Sabha was 24%. 8 Bills were introduced in both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, and 6 were passed.

The budget passed without discussion

This session has been the sixth shortest budget session since 1952. Lok Sabha spent 18 hours on financial business, of which 16 hours were spent on the general discussion of the Budget. In the previous budget sessions of the 17th Lok Sabha, financial business was discussed for 55 hours on an average. The expenditure of five Ministries (amounting to Rs 11 lakh crore) was listed for discussion in Lok Sabha, however none were discussed. The proposed expenditure of all Ministries, amounting to Rs 42 lakh crore, was passed without any discussion. In the last seven years, on average, 79% of the Budget has been passed without discussion.

PreSense Speaks: Review of 17th Lok Sabha

Rajya Sabha discussed the workings of select Ministries during the budget session. Seven ministries, including the Ministries of Railways, Skill Development, Rural Development, Cooperation, and Culture, were to be discussed during this session. None of these were ever discussed.



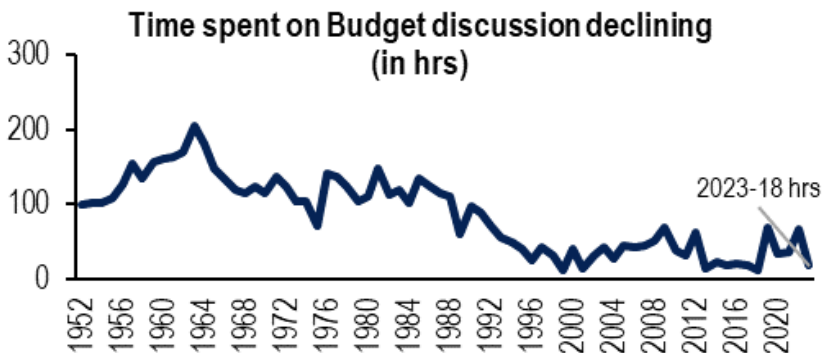
Debates, Private Members Bills and Questions

The Motion of Thanks on the President's Address was the only item discussed in this session. It was discussed for about 28 hours in both Houses, with 150 members participating in total.

This session also saw the least amount of time spent on questions in the current Lok Sabha. Question Hour functioned for 19% of scheduled time in Lok Sabha and 9% in Rajya Sabha. About 7% of starred questions were answered in each House. No Private Member Bills were introduced or discussed. Each House discussed just one Private Member Resolution.

PreSense Speaks: Review of 17th Lok Sabha

Members can raise important issues during Debates, Questions, and Private Members' Bills. Unfortunately, due to ruckus and disruption, Members were not able to participate effectively.



Election of Dy. Speaker, Lok Sabha

PreSense has been pointing out from the beginning of the 17th Lok Sabha that the Dy. Speaker was not elected in time. With one more year to go for 17th Lok Sabha, this Lok Sabha will create one more record for not electing Deputy Speaker in the post-Independence era.

PreSense has been honouring good Parliamentarians with Sansad Ratna Awards for their top performance in the House. PreSense shed tears to know that this 17th Lok Sabha is going to create records for wrong reasons in the 75 years of post-Independence era, when it completes its term. Unless both the ruling and opposition realise their responsibility of running the Parliament to its fullest efficiency, the next generation may lose hope on the system. It is time they respect the Constitutional Institutions, beyond their political gains.

Graphics and content source: PRS India

Top Performers of Indian Parliament till the end of Budget 2023

By Priyadharshni Rahul, Editor (April 2023)

Data source: PRS India

Lok Sabha – Total tally of Initiated debates + Private Members Bills + Questions

(From the first sitting of 17th Lok Sabha in 2019 till the end of Budget Session 2023)

Name of the MP	Party	State	Total of Initiated debates + PMB+ Questions
Smt. Supriya Sule	NCP	Maharashtra	711
Shri Shrirang Appa Barne	Shiv Sena	Maharashtra	630
Shri Bidyut Baran Mahato	BJP	Jharkhand	616
Shri Sukanta Majumdar	BJP	West Bengal	599
Shri Kuldeep Rai Sharma	INC	A & N Islands	580

PreSense Speaks: Review of 17th Lok Sabha

Lok Sabha - Initiated Debates

(From the first sitting of 17th Lok Sabha in 2019 till the end of Budget Session 2023)

Name of the MP	Party	State	Initiated Debates participated
Shri Adhiranjan Choudhury	INC	West Bengal	201
Shri N K Premachandran	RSP	Kerala	196
Shri Hanumana Ram	RLP	Rajasthan	172

Lok Sabha – Private Members Bills

(From the first sitting of 17th Lok Sabha in 2019 till the end of Budget Session 2023)

Name of the MP	Party	State	Private Members Bills introduced
Shri Gopal Chinayya Shetty	BJP	Maharashtra	17
Shri Nishikant Dubey	BJP	Jharkhand	16
Shri N K Premachandran	RSP	Kerala	15

PreSense Speaks: Review of 17th Lok Sabha

Lok Sabha – Questions

(From the first sitting of 17th Lok Sabha in 2019 till the end of Budget Session 2023)

Name of the MP	Party	State	Questions
Shri Sukanta Majumdar	BJP	West Bengal	560
Smt. Supriya Sule	NCP	Maharashtra	546
Shri Bidyut Baran Mahato	BJP	Jharkhand	546

Lok Sabha – Women Category

(From the first sitting of 17th Lok Sabha in 2019 till the end of Budget Session 2023)

Name of the MP	Party	State	Total of Initiated debates + PMB+ Questions
Smt. Supriya Sule	NCP	Maharashtra	711
Dr Heena Vijayakumar Gavit	BJP	Maharashtra	537
Smt. Sangeeta Kumari Singh	BJP	Odisha	474

Rajya Sabha – Overall Performance during the calendar year 2023

Name of the MP	Party	State	Total of Initiated debates + PMB+ Questions
Dr Yajnik Ameer Harshadray	INC	Gujarat	74
Shri M Mohamed Abdulla	DMK	Tamil Nadu	61
Dr Fauzia Tahseen Ahmed Khan	NCP	Maharashtra	59

Departmentally Related Standing Committees (Based on the performance from 1st June 2019 till 30th April 2023)

Committee	Chairman	Reports Presented	Sittings
Finance	Dr Jayant Sinha	58	73
Agriculture	Shri P C Gadigounder	56	79
Transport, Tourism and Culture	Dr Vijaysai Reddy and Shri T G Venkatesh (Retd. Chairman)	76	86

Empowering Indian Women: Parliament Passes Landmark Women's Reservation Bill - Reserving One-Third of Seats for Women

By Priyadharshni Rahul, Editor (Sep 2023)



Indian Parliament made history during the Special Session held in September 2023 in the new building named 'Sansad Bhavan' by passing the 128th Constitution Amendment Bill that provides one-third reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and other State Assemblies. In the historic event, Lok Sabha passed the Bill on 20th September 2023 with 454 members voting in favour and 2 against. The Rajya Sabha on 21st September 2023 passed the Bill with 214 voting in favour and none against.

It is historic in the sense that the Constitutional Amendment could be passed in both Houses of Parliament after 27 years. Though the Bill was introduced in 1996 for the first time, this could not be passed due to differences of views among the parties. The Bill was introduced several times without getting



Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal introducing the historic bill in the Lok Sabha

passed. Modi Government made efforts to bring consensus among the parties to get the Bill passed in both Houses. This being a Constitutional Amendment Bill, it needs to be ratified by 50 per cent of the State Assemblies. All the parties have agreed to this Bill, it will get ratified by the State Assemblies too within two or three months. After the assent by the President, the Bill will become effective.

Presently, the current Lok Sabha has only 14 per cent of the women members. The State Assemblies in India account for less than 10 per cent of the women members. Now this amendment enables one-third of the seats in Lok Sabha and State Assemblies to be reserved for women. This includes the reserved constituencies for SCs and STs.

PreSense Speaks: Review of 17th Lok Sabha

The one-third women's reservation will come into effect only for the 2029 General elections because, as per Article 82 of the Indian Constitution, the Census has to be completed before the Delimitation Commission is appointed. The Delimitation Commission is to be headed by a retired Supreme Court Judge. The Delimitation Commission will go through the Census data and mark the constituencies for Lok Sabha and State Assemblies, including the reserved ones.

The Census was not held in 2021 due to corona pandemic and is likely to start only after the General Elections in 2024. It may take even two years. The Delimitation Commission will be appointed for marking the new constituencies by 2026 and it may take another two years. The Election Commission does not have any authority to mark the constituencies. They can conduct only elections. The procedures are enshrined in Article 82 of the Indian Constitution. In view of this, the new reservation quota for women can come into force only from 2029, provided nobody challenges the amendment in the Supreme Court.

Some of the political parties allege that the ruling party made this amendment in a hurry when there was no urgency. In our view, this Bill has been pending for more than 27 years for various political reasons. PreSense appreciates the Modi Government for bringing this legislation now when there is a consensus among the political parties and getting it passed. This Bill is long overdue. We may not know what will happen in the future with ever-changing political views. The Parliament has passed this amendment and hence there would be pressure on the new Government to start the census and form the Delimitation Commission for implementing this amendment.

Since this eMagazine PreSense has been honouring the top performing Parliamentarians with Sansad Ratna Awards since

PreSense Speaks: Review of 17th Lok Sabha

2009, we have observed that women Parliamentarians, though in small numbers, perform better with high-quality participation. It may be noted that both in the 16th and 17th Lok Sabha, Supriya Sule (NCP, Maharashtra) is maintaining the No. 1 position among the MPs in the overall performance.

PreSense also takes pride that Arjun Ram Meghwal, the Minister for Law and Justice and also the Chairman of the Jury Committee of Sansad Ratna Awards (an initiative of this eMagazine PreSense) has piloted this historic Bill in the Parliament.

While congratulating the Government and all political parties on the historic decision, PreSense believes that it will further empower Indian women in governance.

For background information about this Bill and a comparison with other countries. Please read the analysis by PRS India

<https://tinyurl.com/womenbill2023>

Unity Beyond Politics: Reflections on Winter Session 2023

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Managing Editor (Dec 2023)

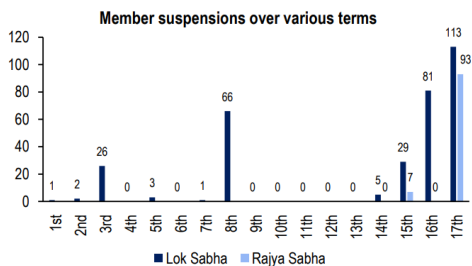
(Winter Session 2023 raises democracy concerns, marked by disruptions and a security breach. Plea for unity, mature leadership, and opposition vitality. BJP urged to engage in dialogue. Strengthening democracy demands collaboration.)

The recently concluded Winter Session of Parliament in 2023 has raised serious concerns among the public regarding the functionality of democracy. Commencing on December 4, 2023, and concluding on December 21, the Winter Session witnessed disruptions and suspensions. The Lok Sabha functioned for 74% of the scheduled time, and the Rajya Sabha for 81%.

The spark that ignited heightened concerns occurred on December 13 with an unprecedented security breach. Two intruders jumped from the visitor's gallery into the Chamber, highlighting vulnerabilities in the security systems of the new Parliament House. Despite the Speaker initiating a high-powered investigation and proposing measures for future safety, opposition members disrupted the House. They demanded a response from the Prime Minister and a discussion in the House.

Frequent disruptions led to numerous adjournments in both Houses. This resulted in an unprecedented move by the Government to suspend 146 MPs (100 from Lok Sabha and 46 from Rajya Sabha) in a single stroke. This is the first time, a large-scale suspension has happened in the post-Independent era. Media responses varied, expressing both support and opposition to these suspensions. With a significant absence of

PreSense Speaks: Review of 17th Lok Sabha



opposition members, the Government proceeded with legislative business. Crucial bills, including a new criminal law bill, press regulation bill, and telecom bill, were passed.

Historically, opposition parties, notably led by Congress, have engaged in disruptions on flimsy grounds in the current 17th Lok Sabha. Apart from causing disruptions, a faction of opposition members exhibited unethical behaviour within the complex, protesting the suspensions. The regrettable incident of Kalyan Banerjee, a TMC member, mimicking Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar was captured by Rahul Gandhi on his mobile, gaining viral attention. Even the President of India and the Prime Minister expressed concern over such behaviour. Even Mamta Banerjee, Chief Minister of West Bengal and an ally of Congress, also slammed Rahul Gandhi for his act of recording on his mobile and making it viral.

The opposition's call for an open discussion in Parliament is deemed highly irresponsible. With a high-powered investigation already ordered, discussing a national security threat openly before cameras is not prudent. Instead, the opposition can demand the Government engage in closed discussions to address the crisis facing the nation and the parliamentary democracy.

PreSense Speaks: Review of 17th Lok Sabha



Kalyan Banerjee mimicking the Vice President and Rahul Gandhi recording in his mobile

PreSense, in various editions, has highlighted how during the Narasimha Rao Government, both ruling and opposition parties collaborated in times of economic and external threats. Narasimha Rao deputed the Opposition leader Vajpayee to the United Nations to speak on behalf of the Indian Government. That gesture sent a strong signal across the world that India was united on major issues. Unfortunately, today's political landscape lacks mature opposition leaders like Vajpayee or Advani, who prioritised national interests over politics.

Given the Congress's role as the largest opposition party, they must introspect and nurture a leader with a high level of thinking beyond politics. A senior leader like Rahul Gandhi video capturing the mimicking indicates the lack of guidance by experienced leaders. Senior leaders like Pranab Mukherjee, Dr. Veerappa Moily, A. K. Antony, Gulam Nabi Azad, and Ahmed Patel would not have allowed such things.

For a robust democracy, a nation requires not only a strong ruling party but also a vibrant opposition. PreSense hopes Congress recognizes its role in the nation's development and develops leadership that thinks beyond political considerations. They were ruling the country for more than 50 years. Even now, several leaders with expertise in governance are with Congress. They have to be involved in developing next-level leadership.

PreSense Speaks: Review of 17th Lok Sabha

Simultaneously, the ruling BJP should extend invitations to opposition leaders for dialogue outside the Parliament to resolve sensitive issues. Allegations against the BJP for passing bills without committee references and without discussions in the House and the vacant position of Deputy Speaker in the 17th Lok Sabha need to be addressed.

India stands as the world's largest and most robust democracy. Strengthening democracy necessitates collaborative efforts between ruling and opposition parties, respecting the meticulously crafted Constitution by our freedom fighters.

Graphics Courtesy and source: PRS India

Unlocking the 17th Lok Sabha: Triumphs and Challenges

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Mg. Editor (March 2024)

(Assessment of 17th Lok Sabha: mixed results, minimal sittings, legislative shortcomings, highlighting wins, and addressing challenges for future parliamentary efficiency.)



The 17th Lok Sabha functioned between June 2019 and February 2024 and has completed its full term. The Election Commission has announced the schedule for electing the 18th Lok Sabha. General elections will be held across the country in 7 phases during April and May 2024. The 18th Lok Sabha will be constituted in the first week of June 2024.

Despite the successful completion of the full term by the 17th Lok Sabha, there is a notable lack of discussion, both among the public and in the media, regarding its performance and the contributions made by the elected Members. Analogous to how we review the performance of our children monthly to improve

their education, it is essential to assess the accomplishments and shortcomings of the Lok Sabha upon completion of its term. Before casting our votes, it is imperative to scrutinize the performance of the completed Lok Sabha and its Members.

In this editorial, we will evaluate the performance of the Lok Sabha from the Government's perspective, as they are responsible for running the Parliament. We will also examine the role of the Opposition in effectively running the Parliament. Additionally, a separate article in this edition will review the performance of MPs based on factors such as State, gender, party affiliation, and age.

Role of Parliament

Though the role of Parliament is not explicitly defined in any law, conventionally, it encompasses four main functions: (1) passing legislation, (2) approving the finance bill, (3) supervising the executive, and (4) discussing and finding solutions to problems related to constituencies, States, and the nation. Members are equipped with tools such as debates, Private Members' Bills, and questions to fulfill these functions. Through effective participation and under the guidance of the Speaker, Parliament serves the people effectively. As the largest democracy globally, the role of Parliament is paramount in ensuring smooth governance.

Sittings and Legislative Business

The 17th Lok Sabha functioned for 88% of its scheduled time, holding 274 sittings over five years. This Lok Sabha set a record for the "least number of sittings among the full-term Lok Sabhas" in the post-Independence era. Out of the 15 sessions held, 11 were adjourned earlier than scheduled, resulting in the cancellation of 40 scheduled sittings. Even during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, 33 sittings were held. There is a significant gap of 57 sittings between the 16th and 17th Lok Sabhas. This decrease in sittings is reflected in the total participation of Members. Additionally, disruptions

PreSense Speaks: Review of 17th Lok Sabha

caused by opposition parties also contributed to the loss of time in Parliament, with 206 instances of MPs being suspended across both the Houses.



Graphics courtesy: PRS Legislative Research

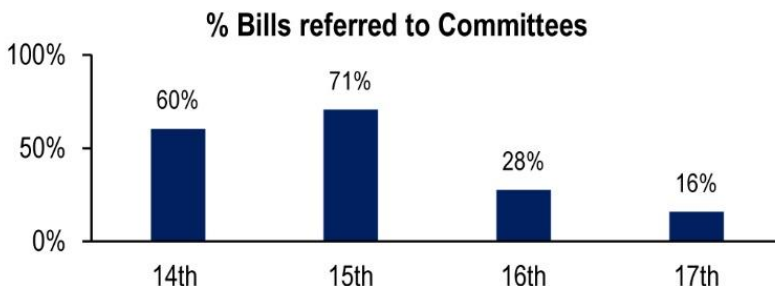
During the 17th Lok Sabha, 179 bills (excluding finance and appropriation bills) were passed. Of these, 58% were passed within two weeks of introduction, and 35% were passed with less than one hour of discussion. Remarkably, 80% of budgets were passed without any discussion, with the entire budget for 2023 being passed without debate. Several important bills, including new criminal laws, were passed in the absence of opposition members who were under suspension. In September 2023, a Special Session was held in the New Parliament House making the beginning of future Sessions.

Role of Committees

Parliamentary Committees play a vital role in the legislative process. Members from all parties thoroughly discuss subjects and reach consensus decisions. Bills are referred to Committees for examination and refinement. However, in the 17th Lok Sabha, only 16% of bills were referred to Committees, compared to 60%, 71%, and 28% in the 14th,

15th, and 16th Lok Sabhas respectively. Examination by Committees and thorough discussions in Parliament are crucial to perfecting bills and withstanding scrutiny from the Supreme Court. The then Chief Justice of India, Justice N V Ramana, noted that when bills were passed without scrutiny and discussion, it strained the court.

Less than 20% of Bills referred to Committees



Graphics courtesy: PRS Legislative Research

Private Members Bills (PMB)

Private Members' Bills allow Members to introduce legislation of national interest without permission from their party leadership. During the 17th Lok Sabha, 729 PMBs were introduced, with only 2 being discussed. This is the highest number among all the Lok Sabhas, except the 16th Lok Sabha, where 1116 PMBs were introduced. Additionally, only 3 out of 11 Private Members Resolutions were discussed during this Lok Sabha. PMBs often receive less priority due to their discussion typically being scheduled for Friday evenings. It is suggested that the Business Advisory Committee of the 18th Lok Sabha should consider moving PMB discussions to weekdays.

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Questions

A total of 101,999 questions were raised during the 17th Lok Sabha, with an average of 195 per Member. Starred Questions receive oral answers from Ministers, while Unstarred Questions receive written replies. During the Question Hour, 60% of the scheduled time was used for oral responses, with 24% of listed questions being answered.

Election of Deputy Speaker

As per Article 93 of the Indian Constitution, the Deputy Speaker should be elected as early as possible. However, no Deputy Speaker was elected during the 17th Lok Sabha, making it the only Lok Sabha without one in the post-Independence era.

Conclusion

The 17th Lok Sabha, with its minimal sittings and lack of a Deputy Speaker, faced challenges in effectively conducting legislative business. Many significant Bills were passed without discussion, and only a fraction of the Bills were referred to Committees for scrutiny. Furthermore, disruptions by opposition parties added to the inefficiency. Both the Government and the opposition leaders must collaborate and strategize effectively to utilize Parliament's time for the nation's benefit.

Data courtesy: PRS Legislative Research, Delhi

A Decade of Modi's Rule: Achievements, Criticisms and Tasks Ahead

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Mg. Editor (March 2024)

(Modi's likely third term is anticipated amidst BJP's achievements like economic growth, and infrastructural development, but criticised for polarization, lack of communication, and neglect of democratic institutions.)

Amidst great expectations, Narendra Modi was elected as the



Prime Minister of India in 2014 when the BJP secured a vote share of 31% with 282 seats. In 2019, he was elected for a second term with an increased vote share of 37.3% and 303 seats. As the nation gears up for the 18th Lok Sabha elections, pollsters predict that Modi will return for a third term. With no visible anti-incumbency mood against Modi, akin to what was seen in 2004, Modi would likely secure another term. The opposition parties in INDIA Alliance are unable to cobble together a unified force to counter Modi, and they fail to

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project any single leader as the Prime Minister candidate. This lack of cohesion adds strength to the Modi camp.

To write this Cover Story, PreSense conducted a quick online survey to understand the perceptions of people across India regarding Modi's achievements, failures, challenges, and tasks ahead if he is elected for a third term, etc. The Editorial team also spoke to many political leaders, media persons, and the general public to understand their perspectives. In this story, we refrain from quoting anybody but will present general views.

Achievements of the Modi Regime

Almost everybody, including opponents of Modi, admires the digital mode of payments, including payments to farmers and others through bank accounts and the use of QR codes even in small shops. The IMF has appreciated this new digital revolution in India, especially as advanced countries are still facing troubles.

Even the Communist leaders admit that there is economic growth, taking advantage of the global economic environment. When Modi took charge in 2014, India was ranked 10th globally in terms of the economy, and now it has reached 5th. He has promised to elevate it to the 3rd rank during his next term.

India's relationships with foreign countries, including Islamic nations, are appreciated by all. India has shown courage in countering comments by the US, interfering in India's internal matters.

Infrastructure development across the nation, the Women's Reservation Bill, Various Schemes to benefit the people, and the New Education Policy are also considered great achievements.

Moreover, people generally perceive the abrogation of Article 370, the introduction of CAA pending since Independence, the stabilisation of GST, the abolition of Triple Talaq, and scientific achievements as important accomplishments of the Modi Government. Many people also perceive that since the Modi Government took over, the borders are relatively safe, portraying a strong government. The management of the COVID-19 pandemic period with minimal inconvenience and free ration, brave steps for vaccination, against criticism by opposition parties, is considered one of the top achievements.

The construction of the Ram temple at Ayodhya and the renovation of the Varanasi temple, including the cleaning of the Ganga, have strengthened the cultural fabric of this nation. Generally, people perceive that the Modi Government gives importance to Indian culture and Nationalism.

Criticisms

Though the Government boasts of being the 5th largest economy in the world, there is a general perception that it is not helping the poor. They experience inflation, unemployment, price rises, etc. After the Modi Government came to power, concessions given to senior citizens, like railway concessions and other benefits, have been withdrawn. Even insurance facilities are not readily available to senior citizens. Senior citizens share their grievances about the reduction in bank interest and increased cost of living. Unfortunately, none of the Ministers or MPs seem to listen to their pleas.

When PreSense spoke to minority community members, they felt that the BJP was polarizing the country along communal lines, leading to sporadic attacks on minority communities. Political analysts believe that communal polarization occurs due to the demands of minority communities and institutions claiming exclusive privileges, quoting the Constitution, and the

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appeasement of minorities by opposition parties. Like opposition parties enjoying the patronage of minorities, the BJP tries to take advantage of this situation to get the support of the majority community. This issue can be resolved only through dialogues at the local level, with both communities respecting each other's sentiments. "More appeasement, more polarization," said a senior political analyst.

A senior opposition leader said that in the past 10 years, the Modi Government did not respect democratic institutions. He cited examples of vacancies for Constitutional bodies like the Judiciary, Election Commission, Deputy Speaker, etc., remaining unfilled or delayed. An Opposition MP mentioned how Bills were passed in Parliament without reference to Standing Committees or discussion in the House. He also cited the example of the Farm Law Bill, enacted hurriedly and withdrawn after a protest.

Even among the BJP party workers, there is a feeling that MPs and Ministers are unreachable and out of touch with the ground reality, except for a few leaders. Party workers silently admit that some leaders and their private secretaries behave arrogantly and do not help when approached with problems. This is also reflected in the recent list of BJP candidates released by the party that shows the dropping of over 100 sitting MPs, including Ministers.

Though the Modi Government has implemented many schemes to benefit large sections of people, they have not been communicated effectively to reach the people. In South India, Hindi names are used instead of local languages, distancing the party from the people. PreSense has been pointing out for the past 10 years that the BJP Government or party fails to communicate when needed and communicates wrongly when not needed. The arrogant and loose talks by MPs and Ministers are not favoured by the people.

Generally, people perceive BJP as the political wing of RSS, a disciplined social organisation, that respects ethics and values. Unfortunately, in the recent past, many leaders accused by the BJP of corruption have been inducted as members or alliance partners. Even in casual conversation, this phenomenon is referred to as the 'washing machine' to purify persons accused by the BJP of corruption. At the same time, many ED, CBI, NIA, and IT raids are happening to opposition leaders, including arrests. A common citizen doubts the government's intentions, though the reasons may be genuine. "Doing the right actions at the wrong time and wrong actions at the right time are disastrous", said a Professor at a University. Although raids are happening, no known corrupt persons have been punished by the Government.

The entire political campaign is run by Modi and he shoulders all the responsibility. In Karnataka, we have seen how the party workers were lethargic and with the overconfidence that Modi would get votes, lost the Government. BJP has not developed or allowed any leader to mobilise votes like Modi. Many party workers fear that it may affect the party in the future.

Tasks Ahead

PreSense has been advocating Electoral Reforms for the past 10 years, highlighting the need for substantial funding to contest elections. This discourages educated and enthusiastic youngsters from contesting elections due to financial constraints. Nirmala Seetharaman, the Finance Minister, openly stated that she could not contest elections due to lack of funds. The Finance Minister's statement proves that an ordinary person may not be able to contest elections. As T S Krishnamurthy, former Chief Election Commissioner suggests, only Public funding should be considered. Sadly none of the political parties have included Electoral Reforms in their Manifesto. The new Government should start debating the

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Electoral Reforms to enable candidates with poor backgrounds to contest elections.

Though the Government attempted judicial reforms, it failed to achieve them in the past. After the 18th Lok Sabha is constituted, the Government and the Judiciary should collaborate to finalize judicial reforms.

Climate change, which has become a global threat and environmental protection are also important issues to be addressed by the new Government.

There are media reports that some of our Indian political leaders are in clandestine relationships with foreign countries and agencies to destabilise the sovereignty of our nation. The Government should be more vigilant about this and take suitable action.

Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) are the backbone of a developing nation like India. During the Vajpayee regime, more focus was given to small industries, which generated a lot of employment opportunities. Industry leaders say that a large number of small and medium industries have been shut down due to Demonetisation, COVID16 and GST. With lots of criticism about increasing unemployment, the new Government should work on urgent priority to strengthen the MSME sector.

PreSense has been pointing out for the past 10 years that the Modi Government has not given importance to Education Loans to deserving students. In the past ten years, education loan disbursements have come down drastically. Education loans are investments for the future. The new Government should review the Education loan segment and increase its share with a reduction in interest rate.

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The Government and political parties should conduct workshops and seminars for newly elected MPs on effective participation in the House. MPs and Ministers should realize that they represent the people and should deal with them with humility, not arrogance.

There are many misconceptions about the Uniform Civil Code, Citizenship Amendment Act, etc. among minorities. The Government should effectively communicate with the people to counter the wrong narratives set by vested interests.

Opposition parties should effectively utilise Parliament time to discuss and debate problems concerning the people to find solutions. Engaging in disruptions sends the wrong signal to the younger generation.

Ruling and opposition parties should come together and serve the nation with mutual understanding. Only then we can feel proud of being the largest successful democracy in the world.

Modi 3.0: Challenges and Opportunities Ahead

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Managing Editor (May 2024)

(PreSense congratulates the Election Commission and BJP on the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, emphasising on high voter turnout, BJP's challenges, and democracy's prospects.)



Three Cheers to the Indian Election Commission

PreSense congratulates the Indian Election Commission for successfully conducting the 2024 General Elections to elect 543 Members of the Lok Sabha. The Election Commission deployed 1.8 million Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) across 1.1 million polling booths nationwide. Around 11 million officials, including security personnel, were involved in the election process. The elections were held in seven phases across the country, with 670 million voters participating, resulting in a turnout average of 62%.

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The counting of votes was conducted transparently on June 4, 2024, with live telecasts of the results. Within four hours, the nation saw a clear trend emerge, and the final results were declared by the end of the day. India takes great pride in its dynamic democracy, which saw the largest number of voters turning out in person to elect their Parliament.

BJP's Hat-Trick Victory

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has made history as the first non-Congress party to form the government at the Centre for the third consecutive time since Jawaharlal Nehru's tenure. The BJP alone secured 240 seats, while the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) headed by the BJP secured 293 seats, 21 seats above the majority mark of 272. In 2019, the BJP had secured 303 seats, but this time it fell short by 63 seats.



Analysing the BJP's Performance

In 2019, the BJP secured 22.9 crore votes with a vote share of 37.3%. In 2024, despite a slight drop in vote share to 36.6%, the BJP polled 23.6 crore votes, which is higher than in 2019. However, the number of seats dropped from 303 in 2019 to 240 in 2024. The Indian National Congress (INC) increased its vote count from 11.9 crore in 2019 to 13.7 crore in 2024, resulting in a vote share increase from 19.5% to 21.2%. Consequently, the INC increased its seats from 52 to 99 in 2024. The main reason may be that the entire opposition which was fragmented in LS 2019 elections unified to form a single alliance now. All the opposition votes were transferred to this unitary alliance. This caused an increase in its vote share.

Unemployment and rising prices were significant issues affecting the common man, which Prime Minister Modi did not address adequately in his campaign. Opposition parties highlighted these issues prominently. Additionally, Modi's communal rhetoric against Muslims and the hype around the Ram Mandir failed to garner the expected support. The narrative of fear created among minorities, particularly Muslims, led to a consolidated vote against the BJP.

Conversely, Hindu votes did not consolidate as expected. A classic example is the Faizabad Lok Sabha constituency where the Ayodhya Ram Mandir is situated. The BJP thought the Ram Mandir inauguration in Ayodhya would consolidate Hindu votes. But it did not happen. The Samajwadi Party candidate defeated the BJP candidate comfortably in Faizabad.

The extreme heatwave in north India led to low voter turnout. This also worked against BJP.

The entire burden of the campaign rested on the 74 year old Prime Minister Modi with no alternate leaders stepping up.

Many competent leaders within the party were not utilized effectively for the campaign.

Over the past decade, many BJP Ministers and their secretaries were reported to be unapproachable and unhelpful, even to party workers and the general public. Many displayed arrogances, refusing to meet visitors or delaying meetings. This attitude frustrated dedicated BJP workers and the general public alike.

During this election, it was reported that Rashtriya Swyam Sevak Sangh (RSS), the parent body of the BJP, did not actively take part in the campaign. RSS has been an invisible strength to BJP in all elections. BJP President Nadda also openly declared that BJP did not require the support of RSS and they had enough strength to manage the elections. These type of arrogant speeches of senior leaders distanced the committed cadre. It may be noted that in the post emergency election, Indira Gandhi was defeated only because of the RSS. Even in 2014, Modi was made Prime Minister only with the sustained support of RSS. The absence of RSS in the campaign, infighting within BJP, ego among the leaders coupled with arrogance and apparent over confidence have cost them heavily.

BJP should appoint a high-power committee to study in detail the omissions and commissions they made, which lead to this unhappy situation. However, BJP should be happy that people have given them mandate to rule for third time, albeit with the support of the alliance partners. This works as checks and balances for the governance.

Challenges Ahead for the BJP

With the BJP securing 32 seats lower than the majority mark of 272, forming a government will require the support of pre-poll allies like TDP, JDU, JDS, and others. At the time of writing

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this editorial, the NDA has accepted Narendra Modi as the Prime Ministerial candidate and will be claiming to form the government.

Narendra Modi has previously managed the Gujarat Government and the Central Government with an independent majority, allowing him to make decisions independently. This time, he will face the challenges of handling alliance partners and their demands, similar to what Vajpayee experienced in 1998. Modi will find it difficult to implement all his promises independently and without consulting partners. Sensitive bills, like the Uniform Civil Code, will need to be discussed with partners before being introduced in Parliament. Modi will likely need to draw up a 'Common Minimum Programme' in consultation with alliance partners. Modi and Amit Shah must adapt their functioning and body language to suit the new political environment.

PreSense has consistently highlighted the need for an effective opposition in a democracy. With the INDIA alliance securing 233 seats, they can function effectively in the House.

During Vajpayee regime, when it faced a similar situation with its coalition partners, George Fernandes, a senior leader of the alliance party and acceptable to all the partners, was the convenor. He managed all the crisis and disputes within partners, through dialogue. Now BJP should identify another 'George Fernandes', who can handle alliance partners with comfort. This will ensure the smooth governance of the country.

Strengthening Democracy

One of our main concerns in the 17th Lok Sabha was the lack of discussion on bills and the Budget. Bills were not referred to Standing Committees for scrutiny. Another major concern was not filling up the constitutional positions like Deputy

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Speaker of Lok Sabha, Members of the Election Commission, Governors, Members of various Statutory and Constitutional bodies, etc. in time. Either they were not filled up or filled up after undue delay. PreSense is confident that with a larger opposition presence in the 18th Lok Sabha, the new Lok Sabha will effectively discharge its duties, thereby strengthening Indian democracy.

PreSense once again congratulates Modi and his new team. We are confident that they will serve the nation with renewed vigour and enthusiasm.

Navigating the Challenges and Opportunities of India's 18th Lok Sabha

By Prime Point Srinivasan, Managing Editor (June 2024)

(The 18th Lok Sabha, featuring a BJP-led majority and a strong opposition, presents a dynamic mix of challenges and opportunities for governance and reform.)

The 18th Lok Sabha has now been constituted, with nearly 900 million people participating in the electoral process. India proudly holds the title of the world's largest democracy with a mature electoral system. PreSense congratulates the Election Commission and the newly elected Members of Parliament of this 18th Lok Sabha.



PreSense is also proud that 16 Sansad Ratna Awardees who contested have returned to the Lok Sabha, with three becoming Ministers in the Modi Cabinet. Pro-Term Speaker Shri Bhartruhari Mahtab, a recipient of the Sansad Ratna Award for the 16th and 17th Lok Sabhas, administered oath of office to all MPs. As we write this editorial, the Hon'ble President has addressed the joint session of both Houses,

setting the stage for proceedings. This distinctive Lok Sabha features a majority ruling alliance alongside a strong opposition, which places added responsibilities on both sides. The mix of opportunities and challenges they face will undoubtedly make this 18th Lok Sabha dynamic.

Opportunities and Challenges for the Ruling Alliance

Led by Narendra Modi, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its allies have secured 294 seats, just 22 seats above the halfway mark of 272. This time, the BJP won only 240 seats, falling 32 seats short of a majority on its own, but managed to form the government with support from its allies. Several sitting Ministers were also defeated; even Narendra Modi won by a reduced margin. Various factors contributed to these outcomes, including the perceived authoritarian attitude of the ruling party leaders, their disconnect with the populace, an unhelpful demeanour broadly observed among leaders, rising unemployment, and escalating prices. The BJP must view this as a chance for introspection and rectifying the past decade's mistakes.

In the last ten years, the BJP has introduced numerous welfare schemes and reform processes, including a digital revolution. Now, in government, again, they should review these initiatives and enhance them. However, it's also noted that many schemes haven't effectively reached those most in need at the grassroots level, which calls for a thorough assessment.

Previously, with a weak opposition in the 16th and 17th Lok Sabha, the BJP managed parliamentary procedures lightly, often passing crucial bills without adequate discussion or in the absence of opposition members, sometimes designating them as finance bills without the usual committee referrals. Now, with a stronger opposition, such tactics are unlikely to continue. Additionally, the BJP faced internal challenges, including discontent from its own allies and the RSS, which

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reportedly scaled back its campaign efforts due to disagreements with the BJP leadership. Maintaining a harmonious relationship with the RSS will be crucial for the BJP as it prepares for future elections. Moreover, if the BJP fails to address widespread economic issues like price hikes and unemployment effectively, it could face significant backlash in the upcoming Assembly elections.

Opportunities and Challenges for Opposition Parties

After a decade, the Indian National Congress (INC) has secured 99 seats, qualifying it to appoint a Leader of the Opposition (LoP). Rahul Gandhi has donned this role. The INDIA Alliance has a total of 230 seats. Despite forming an alliance, in States like Kerala and West Bengal, the partners contested against each other without a coordinated strategy. The INC and other opposition parties now have substantial opportunities to voice their opinions within the Lok Sabha and to oversee government operations. During the previous term, Congress and others often resorted to shouting and boycotting sessions over trivial matters.

Dr. Sudarsana Nachiappan, a senior Congress leader and former Minister in the UPA Government, feels that the opposition's approach during the last term, which included staging protests inside and outside the House and at the Gandhi Statue for minor issues is not constructive. He advises that the Congress, under Rahul Gandhi's leadership, should prepare thoroughly and engage constructively in parliamentary discussions. He suggests that Rahul Gandhi should consider forming a shadow cabinet similar to those in the UK Parliament to enhance the party's effectiveness.

Though Rahul Gandhi had the opportunity to assume a significant role in the UPA government, he declined any such responsibilities. His attire and public behaviour have led to perceptions of him as a 'non-serious politician' for over a

decade. It seems he lacks senior advisors and mentors who could adequately brief him on historical contexts. On several occasions, Rahul Gandhi was embroiled in controversies for misstating information at public events, contradicting his party's established policies and decisions. Occasionally, these missteps required him to issue apologies in court. Lacking effective mentorship appears to be a recurring issue. Now that he holds the position of Leader of the Opposition, equivalent to a Cabinet Minister, the country will be observing his actions with keen interest. This period presents Rahul Gandhi with a significant opportunity to establish himself as a prime ministerial candidate, especially given that his allies did not nominate him as a PM candidate for the 2014, 2019, and 2024 elections.

Unfortunately, the opposition parties caused a commotion in both Houses, resulting in adjournments even on the first day of sitting after the President's Address. Although protocol requires prioritising the 'Motion of Thanks' to the President, the opposition demanded a discussion on the NEET issue, despite the Government's promise to address it after the Motion of Thanks. Or the Opposition could have used the 'Motion of Thanks' itself to talk about NEET issues. The opposition parties should remember that the people elected them in large numbers to discuss their problems in the House, not to create a disturbance.

Democracy Prevails

The 2024 elections have once again underscored the strength of Indian democracy. The 900 million voters have sent a clear message to both ruling and opposition parties, mandating them to govern responsibly. PreSense is optimistic that both sides will collaborate effectively to utilise public resources wisely and foster national development.

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About this Book

This book is the collection of articles published in the eMagazine PreSense over five years reviewing the performance of 17th Lok Sabha.

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