

4. COMMITTEE SECTION (PETITIONS)

4.1. Main Functions: This Section deals with the following items of work:-

- (i) provides Secretarial assistance to the Committee on Petitions, General Purposes Committee, and such other ad-hoc Committees as may be assigned to this Section from time to time which involves issuance of notices for convening their meetings, preparation of agenda papers/memoranda/background notes/questionnaire/minutes draft reports, etc. for the respective Committees;
- (ii) examination of petitions received for presentation or reporting to the Rajya Sabha in accordance with the provisions contained in Chapter X of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Council of States; and
- (iii) processing of representations received from different quarters and wherever required, forwarding the same to the Ministries/Departments and Chief Secretaries of the States concerned for necessary action.

4.2. Examination of Petitions: The work of the Section in this respect involved examination of the petitions in the context of their admissibility under the Rules after obtaining comments/factual information from the concerned Ministries/Departments of the Central Government thereon. As against twenty six petitions received during the year 2007 a total of twenty one petitions were received during the year 2008. Those were examined in terms of the Rules governing their admissibility. Out of twenty one only the following three petitions were admitted by the Hon'ble Chairman, Rajya Sabha:-

SI No.	From whom received	Countersigned by	Subject matter of the petition	Date of presentation/ report to House
1.	Jainacharya Shreemad Vijay Ratnasundersuriswarje, Delhi.	---	Petition praying for grant of exemption to certain categories of charitable organizations from payment of income-tax on receipt of anonymous donations.	16.4.2008 (By Secretary-General)
2.	Shri Ram Naik, former Union Minister and former Member of Lok Sabha,, Maharashtra	---	Petition praying for integration and	6.5.2008 (By Secretary-General)

	and others		empowerment of Leprosy Affected Person.	
3.	Shri Nanak Chand, President, IFCI Retirees Welfare Association, Dwarka, New Delhi and others.	---	Petition regarding benefits of pay revision and pension to the VRS optees and retirees of IFCI.	21.10.2008 (By Shri Shreegopal Vayas, M.P.)

Above petitions after their presentation/reporting to the House, stood referred to the Committee on Petition for examination and report.

4.3 Committee on Petitions: -Under Rule 147(1) of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Council of States, the Chairman, Rajya Sabha, nominates ten Members to the Committee which holds office until a new Committee is nominated. The Committee was re-constituted on the 28th May, 2008 with Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu as its Chairman. The same Committee continued in office at the end of the calendar year, 2008.

4.3.1 At the beginning of the year 2008, the following petitions were pending for consideration of the Committee:-

Sl. No.	From Whom Received	Countersigned by	Subject matter of the petition
1.	Petition jointly signed by Smt. Asha Sharma, Karol Bagh, New Delhi and Smt. Pratiba Naitthani, Borivali, Mumbai.	Miss Anusuiya Uikey, Member, Rajya Sabha	Petition praying for national debate and evolving consensus on the implementation of the policy for introduction of sex education in the CBSE affiliated schools and holding back its introduction until then.
2.	Shri Gurjit Singh, Patiala, Punjab.	----	Petition regarding misuse of Right to Freedom of Speech and Expression by the print and electronic media and the need to restrict it under Article 19(2) of the Constitution.
3.	Shri Gurjit Singh,	----	Petition praying for

Patiala, Punjab.	imposition of certain reasonable restrictions on the use of mobile phone.
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As compared to the previous year (2007) during which the Committee presented one Report, it could conclude examination of two petitions during the year under review and the Reports thereon were presented to the House as per schedule mentioned below:-

Report Nos.	Subject-matter of the Report.	Date of Presentation to the House.
131 st	Petition praying for integration and empowerment of Leprosy Affected Person.	24.10.2008
132 nd	Petition regarding misuse of Right to Freedom of Speech and Expression by the print and electronic media and the need to restrict it under Article 19(2) of the Constitution.	12.12.2008

Copies of the Reports had been sent to the respective petitioners for their information. These Reports were also forwarded to the concerned Ministries i.e. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and Ministry of Information and Broadcasting respectively for Action Taken Replies thereon.

The examination of one petition viz. imposition of reasonable restrictions on use of mobile phones, which was carried forward from the previous year, could not be completed due to preoccupation of the Committee with four other petitions (two carried forward and three admitted during the year under review). Examination of the petition regarding sex education could be completed during the year and draft report thereon was under preparation at the close of the year.

4.3.2 Action Taken Replies: The Committee examined four ATRs on 117th, 123rd, 128th and 129th Reports during the year 2008 and had closed ATR on its 123rd Report. Final Action Taken Replies were awaited on the ATRs on 117th & 128th Reports of the Committee. Chairman of the Committee was authorised by the Committee to hear Secretary Ministry of Health and Family Welfare about the delay in submission of final ATRs thereon. After the evidence of Secretary in June, 2008 final ATRs have been received upon which proposal for closing the consideration of those two ATRs has been put up for consideration of Chairman, Committee on Petitions. Action Taken Replies of Ministry of Women and Child Development on 129th Report could not be considered during the year. ATR on 130th Report of the Committee was waited from the concerned Ministry.

4.4. Meetings and Study visits of the Committee on Petitions: - Compared to sixteen meetings held last year, the Committee held a total number of eighteen sittings during the year 2008. The details of the meetings, agenda, time taken, etc. are given below:-

Sl. No.	Date of Meeting	Time Devoted Hrs-Mts.	Main Agenda
1.	23.1.2008	0.52	further heard the Secretary and other Officers of Ministry of Human Resource Development (Department of School Education and Literacy) on the petition praying for national debate and evolving consensus on the implementation of the policy for introduction of sex education in the CBSE affiliated Schools and holding back its introduction until then.
2.	21.2.2008	2.15	heard the representatives of the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi on the petition praying for national debate and evolving consensus on the implementation of the policy for introduction of sex education in the CBSE affiliated Schools and holding back its introduction until then.
3.	28.3.2008	0.30	reviewed the pending petitions and Action Taken Notes on its Reports.
4.	10.6.2008	1.40	heard Shri Ram Naik and others on the petition praying for integration and empowerment of leprosy affected persons.
5.	11.6.2008	1.20	heard Jainacharya Srimad Vijay Ratnasundarsuri and others on the petition praying for grant of exemption to certain categories of charitable organizations from payment of income-tax on receipt of anonymous donations.
6.	23.6.2008	1.00	heard the petitioner, Shri Gurjit Singh on his petition praying for imposition of reasonable restriction on the use of mobile phone.
7.	01.7.2008	0.30	considered the ATN received from the M/o Women and Child Development on the recommendation made by the Committee in its Hundred and Twenty-ninth Report on the petition praying for institutionalizing the Integrated Child Development Services Scheme (ICDS) by converting it into a regular Department under the M/o HRD and regularization of services of Anganwadi Workers/Helpers as employees of that Department.
8.	2.7.2008	0.50	heard the representatives of the Ministries of Home Affairs and Law & Justice on the petition on misuse of Right to Freedom of Speech and Expression by the Print and Television media and the need to restrict it under Article 19(2) of the Constitution.

9.	11.7.2008	0.55	heard the Secretary, Ministry of Information & Broadcasting on the petition on misuse of Right to Freedom of Speech and Expression by the print and electronic media and the need to restrict it under Article 19(2) of the Constitution.
10.	13.8.2008	0.30	decided its future course of action on the petition praying for imposition of reasonable restrictions on the use of mobile phones.
11.	4.9.2008	0.25	considered Memorandum No. 4/2008 on media reports relating to examination of the petition praying for imposition of reasonable restrictions on the use on mobile phone.
12.	26.9.2008	1.15	heard oral evidence of the Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on the petition praying for integration and empowerment of leprosy affected persons.
13.	6.10.2008	0.40	discussed the response received from the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare on the issue concerning the petition on integration and empowerment of Leprosy affected persons (LAPs)
14.	21.10.2008	0.15	considered and adopted its draft Report on the petition praying for integration and empowerment of leprosy affected persons(LAPs)
15.	7.11.2008	0.40	considered and adopted its draft Report on the petition regarding misuse of Right to Freedom of Speech and Expression by the Print and Electronic media and the need to restrict it under Article 19(2) of the Constitution.
16.	18.11.2008	1.00	transacted the following business: (i) adoption of its draft 132nd Report (ii) further consideration of Memorandum No.4/2008 on media reports relating to examination petition on restriction of mobile phones and (iii) heard the petitioner on petition reg. benefits of pay revision and pension to the VRS optees and retirees of IFCI
17.	3.12.2008	1.00	transacted the following business:(i) considered and adopted its draft 132nd Report (ii) consideration of Memorandum No.4/2008 on media report relating to petition for imposition of reasonable restrictions on the use on mobile phones(iii) oral evidence of management of IFCI and representatives of M/o Finance on the petition regarding benefits of pay revision and pension to the VRS optees and retirees

			of IFCI.
18.	23.12.2008	0.40	reviewed status of pending petitions.

4.4.1 Study visits of the Committee on Petitions during the year 2008.

Sl. No.	Dates	Places Visited	Discussions held with	Purpose
1.	3 to 8 February, 2008	Kolkata, Bengaluru and Thiruvananthapuram	<p>(i) Interaction with the representatives of regional print and electronic media and other experts on the petition of Shri Gurjit Singh.</p> <p>(ii) Interaction with Parents/ Teachers Association/ Educationists/ NGOs/ representatives of religious groups and State Government representatives on the petition.</p>	<p>In connection with the examination of the issues raised in the following petitions:</p> <p>(i) petition submitted by Shri Gurjit Singh, a resident of Patiala, regarding the misuse of Right to Freedom of Speech and Expression by the print and television media and the need to restrict it under Article 19(2) of the Constitution..</p> <p>(ii) petition signed jointly by Ms. Asha Sharma, a resident of Karol Bagh (New Delhi) and Ms. Pratiba Naitthani, a resident of Borivali (Mumbai) praying for national debate and evolving consensus on the implementation</p>

				of the policy for introduction of sex education in the CBSE affiliated Schools and holding back its introduction until then
2.	18 to 23 August, 2008	Hyderabad, Tirupathi, Nellore, Chengalpattu and Chennai.	Interaction with NGOs associated with rehabilitation of LAPs followed by interaction with the representatives of State Governments on the petition.	In connection with the examination of the issues raised in the petition submitted by Shri Ram Naik and five others praying for integration and empowerment of leprosy affected persons (LAPs).
3.	14 to 18 September, 2008.	Bengaluru and Mumbai	(i) Interaction with States Governments and local authorities, associations of teachers, students and parents, managements of hospitals and educational institutions, school/college Principals, University Professors, religious leaders, and mobile users on the petition praying for imposition of reasonable restrictions on	In connection with the examination of the issues raised in the following petitions: (i) petition submitted by Shri Gurjit Singh, a resident of Patiala, praying for imposition of reasonable restrictions on use of mobile phones. (ii) petition submitted by Shri Ram Naik and five others praying for integration and

			<p>the use of mobile phones.</p> <p>(ii) Interaction with petitioners alongwith NGOs associated with rehabilitation of LAPs followed by interaction with the representatives of Government of Maharashtra on the petition.</p>	<p>empowerment of leprosy affected persons (LAPs).</p>
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4.4.2 Besides attending to the work connected with the meetings of the Committee on Petitions, the Section also handled all correspondence with the Ministries/Departments concerned on various aspects connected with the implementation of the recommendations/observations of the Committee as contained in its Reports presented to the House from time to time.

4.5. General Purposes Committee: - From 1st July 2000 onwards the provisions relating to General Purposes Committee (GPC) find place in Chapter XXIII of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Council of States. In accordance with Rule 279(2) the Committee holds office until a new Committee is constituted. The functions of the Committee are to consider and advise on such matters concerning the affairs of the House as may be referred to it by the Hon'ble Chairman, Rajya Sabha from time to time. No fixed number has been laid down for its membership. Hon'ble Deputy Chairman, Members of the Panel of Vice-Chairmen, Chairmen of all Standing Parliamentary Committees of Rajya Sabha, Leaders of recognized Parties/Groups in the House are nominated to this Committee. The Committee with thirty five Members was reconstituted on the 18th June, 2008. Hon'ble Chairman nominated/re-nominated Members to fill the vacancies caused due to retirements and resignation in 2008. All the re-nominated and new Members of the Committee were informed about their nominations through letters individually addressed to them. .

4.5. 1 Meetings of General Purposes Committee: -The Committee held a total of three sittings and considered thirteen Memoranda in all during the year 2008. The details of the meetings, agenda, time taken, etc. are given below:-

Sl. No.	Date of Meeting	Time Devoted	Main Agenda
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		Hrs-Mts.	
1.	4.3.2008	1.15	(i) Memorandum No. 1 on 'Shifting of Question Hour from the first hour of the day to any other hour of the day'; (ii) Memorandum No. 2 on 'Ensuring participation of more Members in Question Hour'; (iii) Memorandum No. 3 on 'Providing replies to lapsed Notices of Questions'; (iv) Memorandum No. 4 on 'Providing interpretation facility for Tamil throughout the day during Session'; and (v) Memorandum No. 5 on 'Guidelines regarding Study Tours of Parliamentary Committees'.
2.	28.4.2008	1.05	(i) Memorandum No. 6 on 'Proposal for Rajya Sabha Channel as part of Sansad Television Network'; (ii) Memorandum No. 7 on 'Recommendation made by the Second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) regarding opening up of the working of Legislative Committees to the public'; and (iii) Memorandum No. 8 on 'Discussion on more Private Members' Bills in a Session'.
3.	18.12.2008	0.45	(i) Memorandum No. 9 on 'Delay in furnishing of timely reply to Special Mentions'; (ii) Memorandum No. 10 on 'Permitting visiting foreign delegations of Members of Parliament to witness the proceedings of the Parliamentary Committees'; (iii) Memorandum No. 11 on 'Operationalising Rajya Sabha TV Channel'; (iv) Memorandum No. 12 on 'Allowing the Members of Rajya Sabha to use their laptops inside the Chamber'; and (v) Memorandum No. 13 on 'Report of the sub-Committee of the General Purposes Committee of Rajya Sabha to review Guidelines on Study Tours of Parliamentary Committees'.

4.5.2 On 4 March, 2008 Hon'ble Chairman, Rajya Sabha constituted a small sub-Committee comprising three Members of General Purposes Committee of Rajya Sabha to review all aspects relating to guidelines concerning Study Tours of Parliamentary Committees and submit its report thereon. The sub-Committee held two meetings on 6th May and 23rd October, 2008. The

Convenor of the sub-Committee presented its Report to Hon'ble Chairman, Rajya Sabha on 16 December, 2008.

4.6. Preparation of Paragraphs for inclusion in the Journal of Parliamentary Information: Paragraphs for inclusion in the Journal of Parliamentary Information containing information about the work transacted by the two Committees, namely, the Committee on Petitions and the General Purposes Committee, apart from the number of petitions, presented/reported during the year 2008, were prepared and sent from time to time to the Research & Library Section for incorporation in the Journal being issued quarterly.

4.7. Representations received from various individuals/organizations: As against three hundred forty seven in the last year, one hundred twenty five representations on various subjects addressed to the Hon'ble Chairman, Rajya Sabha/Chairman, Committee on Petitions/Secretary-General, Rajya Sabha, were received from different quarters during the year 2008. All such representations were examined in the Section and in appropriate cases copies thereof were sent to the concerned Ministries/Departments and concerned State Governments for necessary action.

4.8. Settlement of Refreshment Bills: Forty-one bills received from the Assistant Commercial Officer (Catering), Northern Railway, Tea Board, Coffee Board, Parliament House Complex in respect of refreshment served in the meetings of the Committees were processed and sent for payment to the Establishment (Accounts) and Budget Section.

4.9. Budgetary Allocation: This Section was allocated a sum of Rs. 25,000/- in the Budget grant for the financial year 2008-2009 under the Head "Other Administrative Expenses (02 00 20). Rs. 51,237 was spent for settlement of Bills in respect of refreshments served in the meetings of the Committees during the year. The expenditure exceeded allocated sum as frequency of meetings of General Purposes Committee increased many fold during the year (total -5). Frequency of Committee on Petitions has also increased to consider six petitions pending before it. Keeping in view increased frequency of meetings an amount of Rs 60, 000/- was projected at Revised Estimate Stage.

4.10. Status of Computerization: This Section has been provided with five Pentium based P.Cs, which were extensively used for disposing of various items of work assigned to the Section. All computers have been linked with Local Area Network and internet facilities. The Section is regularly feeding and updating the data in the Committee Software and Rajya Sabha website. E-mail and SMS facilities are used to inform the Members about the meetings of the Committee.

4.11. Training: During the year 2008, Shri Ashok Kumar Sahoo, Assistant Director was nominated to RIPA, London for training in Parliamentary Administration. Shri Yogamber Singh Nayal, Committee Assistant was imparted in-house training on Parliamentary Practice and Procedure.

4.12. Inspection of the Section during the year: The Annual Office Inspection of the Section for the year 2007 was conducted on 22.2.2008 by Shri Ramchand Virwani, Director (Reporting).

4.13. Analysis of the work done: The details of the activities undertaken by the Section in the year 2008 have been enumerated above. The Quarterly and Monthly Reports in respect of the work transacted by the Committee during the year 2008 were prepared and submitted for perusal/information of Hon'ble Chairman, Rajya Sabha. Similarly, a quarterly statement on the petitions pending before the Committee was compiled and submitted for perusal/information of the Secretary-General. In the context of the goals of this Section, an Action Plan was also prepared and acted upon. These goals were, to a large extent, achieved with success.