

COMMITTEES OF RAJYA SABHA GENERAL INFORMATION

Introduction

Parliamentary Committees play a vital role in the Parliamentary System. They are a vibrant link between the Parliament, the Executive and the general public. The need for Committees arises out of two factors, the first one being the need for vigilance on the part of the Legislature over the actions of the Executive, while the second one is that the modern Legislature these days is over-burdened with heavy volume of work with limited time at its disposal. It thus becomes impossible that every matter should be thoroughly and systematically scrutinized and considered on the floor of the House. If the work is to be done with reasonable care, naturally some Parliamentary responsibility has to be entrusted to an agency in which the whole House has confidence. Entrusting certain functions of the House to the Committees has, therefore, become a normal practice. This has become all the more necessary as a Committee provides the expertise on a matter which is referred to it. In a Committee, the matter is deliberated at length, views are expressed freely, the matter is considered in depth, in a business-like manner and in a calmer atmosphere. In most of the Committees, public is directly or indirectly associated when memoranda containing suggestions are received, on-the-spot studies are conducted and oral evidence is taken which helps the Committees in arriving at the conclusions.

The Committees aid and assist the Legislature in discharging its duties and regulating its functions effectively, expeditiously and efficiently. Through Committees, Parliament exercises its control and influence over administration. Parliamentary Committees have a salutary effect on the Executive. The Committees are not meant to weaken the administration, instead they prevent misuse of power exercisable by the Executive. It may, however, be remembered that Parliamentary control in the context of the functioning of the Committees may mean influence, not direct control; advice, not command; criticism, not obstruction; scrutiny, not initiative; and accountability, not prior approval. This, in brief, is the rationale of the Committee System. The Committees have functioned in a non-partisan manner and their deliberations and conclusions have been objective. This, in a large measure, accounts for the respect in which the recommendations of the Parliamentary Committees are held.

Types of Committees

Rajya Sabha possesses an organised system of Committees. Appointments, term of office, functions and procedure for conducting business in these Committees are regulated under the provisions of the Rules and directions given by the Chairman from time to time.

The Committees may be classified as *Ad hoc* Committees and Standing Committees. *Ad hoc* Committees are appointed from time to time to enquire into specific subjects. They are not named as such in the Rules of Procedure of Rajya Sabha but come into being on a specific motion and become *functus officio* immediately after reporting to the House on matters assigned to them. *Ad hoc* Committees are generally Select Committees and Joint Select Committees on Bills. *Ad hoc* Committees have, however, also been appointed by the House on other specific subjects, as in 1962, the House appointed an *ad hoc* Committee to consider its Rules of Procedure. In 1976 another Committee was appointed to enquire into the conduct of a sitting member of the House and in 1983 a Committee was constituted for reconciliation between the Nirankaris and Akalis. Again, on the 9th August, 1995 a fifteen-member Railway Wagon Committee was constituted to examine all the aspects relating to procurement of Railway Wagons.

The second category of Committees, namely, Standing Committees may be divided in terms of their functions under four broad heads:

1. Committees to enquire—

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

2. Committees to scrutinise and control—

- (a) Committee on Government Assurances;
- (b) Committee on Subordinate Legislation; and
- (c) Committee on Papers Laid on the Table.

3. Committees relating to day-to-day business of the House—

- (a) Business Advisory Committee; and
- (b) Rules Committee.

4. House Keeping Committees—

- (a) House Committee;
- (b) General Purposes Committee; and
- (c) Committee on Provision of Computers to Members of Rajya Sabha.

There are some **Financial Committees of Lok Sabha** with which Members of Rajya Sabha are associated. These are:

- (a) Committee on Public Accounts; and
- (b) Committee on Public Undertakings.

There are also **Joint Parliamentary Committees** on which members of both the Houses are represented. These Committees are:

- (a) Committee on the Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes;
- (b) Committee on Offices of Profit;
- (c) [Parliamentary Committee to review the rate of dividend payable by the Railway Undertaking to the General Revenues] (Railway Convention Committee);
- (d) Committee on Empowerment of Women
- (e) Library Committee
- (f) Committee on Food Management in Parliament House Complex
- (g) Committee on Installation of Portraits/Statues of National Leaders and Parliamentarians in the Parliament House Complex
- (h) Committee on Security Matters in Parliament House Complex

Some other Committees of both the Houses are constituted under the provisions of law. For example, the Joint Committee of the Houses of Parliament constituted under section 9(1) of the Salary, Allowances and Pension of Members of Parliament Act, 1954.

The members of Rajya Sabha on the Committee on Public Accounts, the Committee on Public Undertakings, the Committee on Offices of Profit and the Committee on the Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are elected by the House, while **[members of the other Joint Committees are nominated by the Chairman]** The proportion of number of Members of the two Houses on these Committees is **approximately** in the ratio of 2 Members of Lok Sabha to 1 of Rajya Sabha.

Following is the list of Parliamentary Standing Committees which function in Rajya Sabha:

Sl. No.	Name of the Committee	No. of members in the Committee
1.	Business Advisory Committee	11
2.	Committee on Papers Laid on the Table	10
3.	Committee on Petitions	10
4.	Committee of Privileges	10
5.	Committee on Rules	16
6.	Committee on Subordinate Legislation	15
7.	Committee on Government Assurances	10
8.	General Purposes Committee	Not fixed
9.	House Committee	10
10.	Ethics Committee	10
11.	Committee on Provision of Computers for Members of Rajya Sabha	7
12.	Committee on Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme	10

Normally the Committees mentioned at Serial Nos. 1 to 9 are re-constituted every year but each one of them continues to hold office until a new Committee is nominated. The Committees at Serial Nos. 10 to 12 on the other hand generally continue with the vacancies arising therein from time to time being filled in. They are reconstituted when fairly a large number of vacancies such as due to biennial elections to Rajya Sabha arise.

The functions, etc. of each of these Committees are described below in brief:—

(1) **Business Advisory Committee**— This Committee recommends the time that should be allocated for the discussion of the stage or stages of such Government Bills

and other business as the Chairman in consultation with the Leader of the House may direct for being referred to the Committee. The Committee also recommends the time that should be allocated for the discussion of stage or stages of private Members' Bills and Resolutions. It has the power to indicate in the proposed time-table the different hours at which the various stages of the Bill or other business are to be completed. The Committee performs such other functions as may be assigned to it by the Chairman from time to time. The time-table in regard to the business of the Rajya Sabha as settled by the Committee, is reported by the Chair to the House, **which** is then notified in Rajya Sabha Parliamentary Bulletin Part- **II**.

(2) **Committee on Papers Laid on the Table**— The function of the Committee is to consider, after a paper is laid before the Council by a Minister whether :- (a) there has been compliance with the provisions of the Constitution or an Act of Parliament or any other law, rule or regulations in pursuance of which the paper has been so laid; (b) there has been any unreasonable delay in laying the paper before the Council and if so, whether a statement explaining the reasons for such delay has also been laid before the Council along with the paper and whether those reasons are satisfactory; and (c) the paper has been laid before the Council both in English and Hindi and if not, whether a statement explaining the reasons for not laying the paper in Hindi has also been laid before the Council along with the paper and whether those reasons are satisfactory. The Committee performs such other functions in respect of the papers laid on the Table as may be assigned to it by the Chairman from time to time. The reports of the Committee are presented to the House from time to time by the Chairman of the Committee or, in his absence, by any member of the Committee.

(3) **Committee on Petitions**—The functions of the Committee are: (a) to examine every petition referred to it, and if the petition complies with the rules, to direct that it be circulated in *extensor* or in summary form, as the case may be; and (b) to report to the House on specific complaints made in the petition after taking such evidence as it deems fit and to suggest remedial measures, either in a concrete form applicable to the case under consideration or to prevent recurrence of such case. The reports of the Committee are presented to the House by the Chairman of the Committee or in his absence by any member, of the Committee from time to time.

(4) **Committee of Privileges**— The Committee examines every question of

privilege referred to it either by the House or by the Chairman and determines with reference to the facts of each case, whether a breach of privilege is involved and, if so, the nature of the breach, the circumstances leading to it and makes such recommendations as it deems fit. The Committee can also report to the House the procedure that may be followed by the House in giving effect to the recommendations made by the Committee. The reports of the Committee are presented to the House from time to time by the Chairman of the Committee, or in his absence by any member of the Committee. After the report is presented, a motion for consideration of the report may be moved by the Chairman of the Committee, or any other member of the Committee. Any member may give notice of amendment to the motion for consideration of the report in such form as may be considered appropriate by the Chairman. After the motion for consideration of the report has been carried, the Chairman or any member of the Committee or any other member, as the case may be, may move that the House agrees or disagrees or agrees with amendments, with the recommendations contained in the report.

(5) **Committee on Rules**— The Committee considers matters of procedure and conduct of business in Rajya Sabha and recommends any amendments or additions to the rules that may be deemed necessary. Reports of the Committee are presented to the House from time to time by the Deputy Chairman or in his absence by any member of the Committee. After a report is presented, a motion for consideration of the report may be moved by the Deputy Chairman or in his absence by a member of the Committee designated by the Chairman. By giving prior notice members can move amendments to the motion for consideration of the report. After the motion for consideration of the report has been carried, the Deputy Chairman, or in his absence any member of the Committee designated by the Chairman may move that the House agrees, or agrees with amendments, with the recommendations contained in the report.

(6) **Committee on Subordinate Legislation**— The functions of the Committee are to scrutinise and report to Rajya Sabha whether the powers to make rules, regulations, bye-laws, scheme or other statutory instruments conferred by the Constitution or delegated by Parliament are being properly exercised within such conferment or delegation, as the case may be. The Committee examines such rule, regulation, bye-law, scheme or other statutory instrument framed in pursuance of the Constitution or the legislative functions delegated by Parliament to a subordinate

authority, irrespective of the fact whether it is required to be laid before the House or not and, in particular, considers: (a) whether it is in accord with the general objects of the Constitution, or the Act pursuant to which it is made; (b) whether it contains matter which in the opinion of the Committee should more properly be dealt within an Act of Parliament; (c) whether it contains imposition of any tax; (d) whether it directly or indirectly bars the jurisdiction of the Courts; (e) whether it gives retrospective effect to any of the provisions in respect of which the Constitution or the Act pursuant to which it is made does not expressly give any such power; (f) whether it involves expenditure from the Consolidated Fund of India or the public revenues; (g) whether it appears to make some unusual or unexpected use of the powers conferred by the Constitution or the Act pursuant to which it is made; (h) whether there appears to have been unjustifiable delay in its publication or in laying it before Parliament; and (i) whether for any reason its form or purport calls for any elucidation.

The Committee examines Bills which seek to delegate powers to make rules, regulations, bye-laws, etc. or amend earlier Acts delegating such powers, with a view to seeing whether suitable provisions for the laying of the rules, regulations, etc. before Parliament have been made therein. The Committee also examines representations made to it in regard to rules, regulations, bye-laws, etc. made or required to be made under an Act. The reports of the Committee are presented to the House from time to time by the Chairman of the Committee or in his absence, by any member of the Committee.

(7) ***Committee on Government Assurances***— The functions of the Committee are: (a) to scrutinise the assurances, promises, undertakings, etc. given by Ministers from time to time on the floor of the House during Question Hour as also during discussion on Bills, Resolutions, Motions, Calling Attention notices, etc.; and (b) to report to the House on the extent to which such assurances, promises, undertakings, etc. have been fully or satisfactorily implemented, and when implemented, whether such implementation has taken place within the minimum time necessary for the purpose or whether there has been an inordinate delay in the implementation of assurances and if so, the reasons therefor. The Committee determines its own procedure in connection with all matters relating to the consideration of any question of assurances, promises, undertakings, etc. by it. The reports of the Committee are presented to the House from time to time by the Chairman of the Committee or, in

his absence, by any member of the Committee.

(8) **General Purposes Committee**—The General Purposes Committee consists of the Chairman, the Deputy Chairman, members of the panel of Vice-Chairmen, Chairmen of all Parliamentary Standing Committees of Rajya Sabha, Leaders of recognised parties and groups in Rajya Sabha and such other members as may be nominated by the Chairman. The Chairman, Rajya Sabha, is the ex-officio Chairman of the Committee. 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 Chairman from time to time.

(9) **House Committee**—The functions of the Committee are (i) to deal with all questions relating to the allotment of residential accommodation to Members of Rajya Sabha and to exercise supervision over facilities for accommodation so allotted and other amenities given to Members in their residences and hostels in Delhi/New Delhi; and (ii) to make appropriate recommendations in regard to matters of common interest to Members of both Houses of Parliament pertaining to their residences and other amenities. For this, it is a practice that the Chairmen of the House Committees of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha confer together.

(10) **Committee on Ethics**—With the incorporation of rules relating to the Committee on Ethics in the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Council of States *w.e.f.* July 20, 2004, the mandate of the Committee was widened to, apart from overseeing the moral and ethical conduct of Members, preparing a Code of Conduct for Members and to suggest amendments or additions therein from time to time in the form of reports to the Council; examining cases concerning the alleged breach of Code of Conduct by Members as also cases concerning allegations of any other ethical misconduct of Member; and tendering advice to Members from time to time on questions involving ethical standards either *suo-motu* or on receiving specific requests. The Committee was also bestowed with the power to recommend imposition of sanctions such as censure, reprimand, suspension from the Council for a specific period and any other sanction for proven unethical behaviour or other misconduct and contravention of the Code of Conduct / rules on the part of the Members. The Committee consists of 10 Members and as per practice, the Leaders of top ten parties as per their numerical strength in the House are generally nominated to be the members of the Committee and in case the Leaders happen to

be Ministers then the choice is extended to the Deputy Leaders of the parties. The Chairman is appointed from amongst the Members of the Committee. The reports of the Committee are presented to the House from time to time by the Chairman of the Committee or, in his absence, by any other Member of the Committee authorized by the Committee.

(11) *Committee on Provision of Computers to Members of Rajya Sabha*—

This Committee was first constituted by the Chairman, Rajya Sabha on the 18th March, 1997 and has continued since then with vacancies therein being filled from time to time or the Committee being re-constituted as and when required. The Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha is the Chairman of the Committee. The Committee goes into all aspects relating to supply of Computers to Members of Rajya Sabha. It also reviews the hardware and software requirements of Members.

(12) *Committee on Members of Parliament Local Area Development*

Scheme—Since a large number of complaints were being received from Members about non-implementation of various items of work under the Members of Parliament Local Area Development (MPLAD) Scheme, it was felt that there should be some effective monitoring mechanism so that proper and quick implementation of projects under MPLAD Scheme could be achieved. With this **objective** in view, a ten-member Committee was constituted in Rajya Sabha on the 5th September, 1998. The Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha is the Chairman of this Committee.

Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committees:-

The need to constitute some kind of subject Committees or the Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committees was being felt for the last several years. In 1989, in fact, three Standing Committees were constituted which dealt with Agriculture, Science and Technology and Environment and Forests. In 1993, it was finally decided to set up seventeen Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committees each consisting of 15 members of Rajya Sabha and 30 from Lok Sabha to cover various Ministries/Departments of the Union Government in order to further strengthen the accountability of the Government to Parliament. With the addition of seven more Committees in July 2004 albeit with reduced membership of 10 from Rajya Sabha and 21 from Lok Sabha, the number of Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committees was raised to 24 out of which 8 were placed

within the jurisdiction of the Chairman, Rajya Sabha and 16 within the jurisdiction of the Speaker, Lok Sabha. Rules 268 to 277 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Conduct of States and Rules 331 C to 331 N of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha govern the Constitution and functioning of these Committees. The following are the 24 DRSCs with the Ministries/Departments allocated to them shown against each:-

PART - I**			
Sl. No.	Name of the Committee	Ministries/Departments	
1.	Committee on Commerce		Commerce and Industry
2.	Committee on Home Affairs	(1)	Home Affairs
		(2)	Development of North-Eastern Region
3.	Committee on Human Resource Development	(1)	Human Resource Development
		(2)	Youth Affairs and Sports
		(3)	Women and Child Development
4.	Committee on Industry	(1)	Heavy Industries and Public
		(2)	Enterprises
			Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
5.	Committee on Science & Technology, Environment & Forests	(1)	Science & Technology
		(2)	Space
		(3)	Earth Sciences
		(4)	Atomic Energy
		(5)	Environment & Forests
6.	Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture	(1)	Civil Aviation
		(2)	Road Transport and Highways
		(3)	Shipping
		(4)	Culture
		(5)	Tourism
7.	Committee on Health and Family Welfare		Health and Family Welfare
8.	Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice	(1)	Law and Justice
		(2)	Personnel, Public Grievances and

			Pensions
PART – II***			
9.	Committee on Agriculture	(1) (2)	Agriculture Food Processing Industries
10.	Committee on Information Technology	(1) (2)	Communications and Information Technology Information & Broadcasting
11.	Committee on Defence		Defence
12.	Committee on Energy	(1) (2)	New and Renewable Energy Power
13.	Committee on External Affairs	(1) (2)	External Affairs Overseas Indian Affairs
14.	Committee on Finance	(1) (2) (3) (4)	Finance Corporate Affairs Planning Statistics and Programme Implementation
15.	Committee on Food, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution		Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution
16.	Committee on Labour	(1) (2)	Labour and Employment Textiles
17.	Committee on Petroleum & Natural Gas		Petroleum & Natural Gas
18.	Committee on Railways		Railways
19.	Committee on Urban Development	(1) (2)	Urban Development Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation
20.	Committee on Water Resources		Water Resources
21.	Committee on Chemicals and Fertilizers		Chemicals and Fertilizers

22.	Committee on Rural Development	(1) (2)	Rural Development Panchayati Raj
23.	Committee on Coal and Steel	(1) (2) (3)	Coal Mines Steel
24.	Committee on Social Justice & Empowerment	(1) (2) (3)	Social Justice and Empowerment Tribal Affairs Minority Affairs

The Chairmen of the first **eight** Committees are appointed by **the** Chairman, Rajya Sabha and the remaining **Sixteen** by **the** Speaker, Lok Sabha.

These Department-related **Parliamentary Standing** Committees, which started functioning from the 8th April, 1993 superseded the three subject Committees set up in 1989.

While inaugurating the Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee system in the Central Hall of Parliament on the 31st March 1993, the then Vice-President of India and the Chairman, Rajya Sabha, Shri K.R. Narayanan observed that the main purpose of these Committees is—

"... to ensure the accountability of Government to Parliament through more detailed consideration of measures in these Committees. The intention is not to weaken or criticise the administration but to strengthen it by investing it with more meaningful Parliamentary support".

These Committees are entrusted with the following functions: -

(a) to consider the Demands for Grants of the related Ministries/Departments and report thereon. The report shall not suggest anything of the nature of cut motions;

(b) to examine Bills, pertaining to the related Ministries/Departments, referred to the Committee by the Chairman or the Speaker, as the case may be, and report thereon;

(c) to consider the annual reports of the Ministries/Departments and report thereon;
and

(d) to consider national basic long term policy documents presented to the Houses, if referred to the Committee by the Chairman or the Speaker, as the case may be, and report thereon.

Provided that the Standing Committees shall not consider matters of day-to-day administration of the related Ministries/ Departments.

** Committees within the administrative jurisdiction of Chairman, Rajya Sabha.

*** Committees within the administrative jurisdiction of Speaker, Lok Sabha.