During the year 2005, Rajya Sabha sat for 85 days – 38 days during the 204th Session, 24 days during the 205th Session and 23 days during the 206th Session. The 204th Session (Budget Session) was the longest, from 25 February to 13 May 2005, with a break from 25 March to 18 April, with a view to enabling the Department-related Standing Committees to examine Demands for Grants of various Ministries/Departments. During the year 2005, the House sat for 401 hours and 29 minutes. The House sat longer than the normal 5 hours on 48 days and without lunch break on 8 days.

Summons for the 204th Session (Budget Session) was issued on 31 January 2005. The 204th Session of Rajya Sabha commenced on 25 February 2005 and adjourned sine die on 13 May 2005. The President addressed Members of both Houses of Parliament assembled together in the Central Hall on 25 February 2005. Summons for the 205th Session was issued on 8 July 2005. The 205th Session that commenced on 25 July 2005 was adjourned sine die on 30 August 2005. Summons for the 206th Session was issued on 3 November 2005. The 206th Session of Rajya Sabha commenced on 23 November 2005 and adjourned sine die on 23 December 2005.

During the year under review, 243 Lists of Business were issued with regard to the business of the House. In all 4304 papers were laid on the Table of the House. During the year, five divisions were held.

Simultaneous interpretation of the proceedings of the House and its Committees is done from Hindi to English and vice-versa. Arrangements also exist for simultaneous interpretation, in English as well as Hindi, of speeches made in Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Oriya, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu. The facility of such interpretation was also provided in the meetings of all the Parliamentary Committees of Rajya Sabha during the year.

The average attendance of Members during the 204th Session was 145. It was 169 and 165 during the 205th and 206th Sessions respectively. The highest attendance on a day during the 204th Session was 183. It was 183 and 189 during the 205th and 206th Sessions, respectively.

Question Hour:
The first hour of every sitting is generally devoted to the asking and answering of questions. During this hour Members exercise their right to seek information on various issues from the Government on the floor of the House. Questions, in fact, are used by Members as a device to review critically Government’s performance in various fields, to assess the impact of the Government programmes and policies as well as to ventilate public grievances on various matters. During the year 2005, a total of 31,709 notices of questions, both starred and unstarred, were received, of which 13,964 were admitted. Out of these, 1618 questions were listed as starred questions and of these 368 questions, constituting around 22.74 per cent, were taken up for oral answer in the House. During the year, Question Hour was dispensed with on one occasion, i.e., 11 August 2005.

During the year, nine statements were made/laid by the Ministers correcting replies given by them to the questions, starred and unstarred, in Rajya Sabha. For short notice questions, ten notices were received but none was admitted. Besides, thirty-three notices for half-an-hour discussion arising out of the answers given to starred/unstarred questions were received, out of which four were admitted and discussed on the floor of the House.

Legislation:
The following are some of the statistics relating to Bills which came up before Rajya Sabha during the year 2005:

- Number of sittings during which the Government Bills were introduced, considered or laid/reported as passed by Lok Sabha 58
- Number of sittings during which the Private Members’ Bills were introduced or considered 07
- Number of Government Bills introduced 33
- Number of Private Members’ Bills introduced 94
- Number of Government Bills withdrawn/fallen through during the year 06
- Number of Government Bills negatived 00
- Number of Private Members’ Bills withdrawn 01
- Number of Private Members’ Bills negatived 00
- Number of Government Bills introduced in Lok Sabha 38#
- Number of Private Members’ Bills introduced in Lok Sabha 07
- Number of Bills referred to the Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committees 00
- Number of Bills reported by the Select Committees of Rajya Sabha 00
- Number of Bills referred to the Select Committees of Rajya Sabha 00
- Number of Bills referred to the Joint Committees of the Houses of Parliament 00
- Number of Government Bills considered 65
- Number of Government Bills passed/returned by Rajya Sabha 59#
- Number of Government Bills pending at the commencement of the year 36
- Number of Government Bills pending at the end of the year 43
- Number of Private Members’ Bills pending at the commencement of the year 161
- Number of Private Members’ Bills pending at the end of the year 210
- Number of Bills passed by the Houses of Parliament and assented to by the President 56
- Number of Bills on which assent of the President was obtained by the Rajya Sabha Secretariat 13

# Including the Payment of Wages (Amendment) Bill, 2005 on which the amendments made by Lok Sabha were agreed to by Rajya Sabha during the 205th Session.
The Sessions held in the year 2005, witnessed some important legislative developments. The Patents (Amendment) Bill, 2005 was passed by both Houses of Parliament in March 2005 to streamline the Patents Act, 1970 in consonance with the changing needs of patent regime due to globalization and its impact on the domestic market and also to adhere to the international obligations in which India is a party through various treaties and conventions. The Patents (Amendment) Bill, 2005 sought to replace the Patents (Amendment) Ordinance 2004, promulgated by the President on 26 December 2004. The Bill was assented to by the President on 4 April 2005 and became Act No. 15 of 2005.

To ensure greater and more effective access to information to the public at large and to bring transparency in the affairs of the Government, the Right to Information Bill, 2005, a historic piece of legislation was passed by both Houses of Parliament in May 2005. The Bill seeks to provide for setting out a practical regime of right to information for people to secure access to information under the control of public authorities, in order to promote transparency and accountability in the working of every public authority. For this purpose, it provides for appointment of a Central Public Information Officer in each public authority. It also provides for constitution of a Central Information Commission for monitoring the whole mechanism of dissemination of information. A similar set up has also been provided for the States under the Act. The Bill was assented to by the President on 15 June 2005 and became Act No. 22 of 2005.

The Hindu Succession (Amendment) Bill, 2005 was passed by both Houses of Parliament in August 2005. It seeks to remove the gender discrimination and provide parity to daughter in relation to son for participating in the coparcenary ownership for inheriting the ancestral property and retained the fundamental right to equality guaranteed by the Constitution. The Bill was assented to by the President on 5 September 2005 and became Act No. 39 of 2005.

One of the landmark legislations was the National Rural Employment Guarantee Bill, 2005 passed by both Houses of Parliament in August 2005. It constitutes a pioneering endeavour to secure wage employment for the poor households in the rural areas as a guaranteed entitlement. It seeks to provide a legal guarantee for at least 100 days of employment in the form of unskilled manual work in public works programmes every year at minimum wages for at least one able-bodied person to enhance the livelihood security of the poor households in rural areas of the country. If no employment was provided to an applicant within 15 days of receipt of his application seeking employment he would be entitled to a daily unemployment allowance at a prescribed rate. The Bill was assented to by the President on 5 September 2005 and became Act No. 42 of 2005.

Domestic violence in our country has been recognized as criminal offence under section 498A of the Indian Penal Code, but it has a very limited ambit. In order to fulfill the long-standing demand to have a civil law on the domestic violence, the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Bill, 2005 was passed by both Houses of Parliament in August 2005 to address the problem of domestic violence keeping in view the rights guaranteed under articles 14, 15 and 21 of the Constitution. It provides for the safety and security of women, by preventing the occurrence of domestic violence in the society. The Bill was assented to by the President on 13 September 2005 and became Act No. 43 of 2005.

The Disaster Management Bill, 2005 passed by both Houses of Parliament in December 2005, provides for the requisite institutional mechanisms for drawing up and monitoring the implementation of the disaster management plans, ensuring
measures by various wings of the Government for preventing and mitigating effects of disasters and for undertaking a holistic, coordinated and prompt response to any disaster situation. It also provides for setting up of a National Disaster Management Authority, the State Disaster Management Authorities, the District Disaster Management Authorities and National Institute of Disaster Management. The Bill further provides for constitution of a National Disaster Response Fund and a National Disaster Mitigation Fund and similar funds at the State and district levels. The Bill was assented to by the President on 23 December 2005 and became Act No. 53 of 2005.

The Commissions for Protection of Child Rights Bill, 2005 passed by both Houses of Parliament in December 2005, seeks to provide the children opportunities and facilities to develop in healthy atmosphere with required freedom and dignity and to ensure that their constitutional and legal rights are protected. It provides for setting up of a National Commission for Protection of Child Rights for better protection of child rights with enabling provision authorizing the State Governments to set up the State Commissions for Protection of Child Rights. The functions of the Commission inter alia include to study and monitor all matters relating to constitutional and legal rights of children and to look into complaints or take suo motu notice of the cases involving violation of constitutional and legal rights of children. The Bill was assented to by the President on 20 January 2006 and became Act No. 4 of 2006.

The Constitution (Ninety-third Amendment) Act, 2005 is one of the landmark enactments to promote educational advancement of the students belonging to the socially and educationally backward classes (Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes) of citizens in matters of admission to unaided educational institutions, other than the minority educational institutions. The above Act was introduced in the Lok Sabha as the Constitution (One hundred and fourth Amendment) Bill, 2005 and both Houses of Parliament passed the Bill in December 2005. The President assented to the Bill on the 20 January 2006.

In addition to the above legislative developments, various other Bills such as the Coastal Aquaculture Authority Bill, 2005, the Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Bill, 2005, the Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Bill, 2005, the University of Allahabad Bill, 2005, the Manipur University Bill, 2005, the Special Economic Zones Bill, 2005, the Private Security Agencies (Regulation) Bill, 2005, etc. were also passed by both Houses of Parliament and assented to by the President.

Discussion on matters of urgent public importance:

Procedural devices like 'special mention', 'calling attention', 'short duration discussion' and 'no-day-yet-named motion' were utilised by members to raise matters of urgent public importance on the floor of the House. During the year, in all 662 matters of public importance were mentioned in the House through special mention. Out of the 104 calling attention notices on the matters of urgent public importance received, notice on the following 10 subjects were finally admitted and taken up in the House:

(i) Serious crisis faced by the cultivators of vanila due to fall in the prices (13.5.2005);
(ii) Situation arising due to the recent hike in petrol and diesel prices (2.8.2005);

(iii) Unprecedented rain in Mumbai and loss of human lives and property (2.8.2005 and 3.8.2005);

(iv) Recent accident in Bombay High ONGC platform (3.8.2005);

(v) Adverse effect of TV programmes and media contents on the mental health of the children and adolescents in the country (8.8.2005);

(vi) Steep rise in prices of drugs and misuse of drugs in the country and remedial measures taken by the Government (17.8.2005);

(vii) Sale of textile mill land in Mumbai and its socio-economic impact (25.8.2005);

(viii) Shortage of LPG and black marketing of kerosene in the country (8.12.2005);

(ix) Situation arising out of the prolonged violence prevailing in tribal dominated areas in Assam resulting in loss of human lives and properties (21.12.2005); and

(x) Need for formulating a balanced national mineral and mining policy with particular reference to the export of iron ore and denial of linkages for steel production (23.12.2005).

During the year, 178 notices of short duration discussion were received, out of which notices on the following 12 matters were admitted and discussed in the House:

(i) Situation arising out of large scale devastation caused by Tsunami on 26 December 2004 (9.5.2005);

(ii) Suicide by farmers in various parts of the country (22.3.2005);

(iii) Report of the V.S. Malimath Committee on Criminal Justice System (10.5.2005);

(iv) Reconstituting the North-Eastern Council (11.5.2005);

(v) Situation arising due to drought and flood in various parts of the country (26.7.2005 and 27.7.2005);

(vi) Recent terrorist attack in Ayodhya (27.7.2005);

(vii) Situation arising out of the striking down of the IMDT Act by the Supreme Court (22.8.2005 and 23.8.2005);
(viii) State of agriculture, poverty and unemployment in the country in the light of mid-term appraisal of the 10th Five Year Plan (23.8.2005 and 24.8.2005);

(ix) Devastation caused by heavy rains and floods in southern states of the country and relief measures undertaken by the Government (30.11.2005);

(x) Internal security scenario in the country (1.12.2005);

(xi) Public Distribution System in the country (14.12.2005 and 15.12.2005); and

(xii) Concern over atrocities against women in the country (21.12.2005).

Privilege Cases:

During the year, 15 notices of breach of privilege were received and processed. One case relating to alleged assault on Shri N.K. Premachandran, M.P. by the Kerala Police was referred to the Committee and no report of the Committee of Privileges was presented to the House.

Procedure for laying of papers on the Table of the House by private members:

Hon’ble Chairman, Rajya Sabha issued a direction in March 2005 regarding the procedure for laying of papers by private members. Now, if a private member desires to lay a paper or document on the Table of the House, he has to give prior notice to the Chairman of his intention enclosing a copy of the documents which he desires to lay in order to enable the Chairman to decide whether permission should be given to lay the particular paper or document on the Table. If a private member, in the course of his speech wishes to quote from a secret or confidential or classified Government document, paper or report, he has to supply a copy of the same to the Chairman indicating the portions which he wishes to quote in order to enable the Chairman to decide whether permission should be granted. A paper or document which a private member wants to lay on the Table may be considered for laying only if the member has quoted from such paper or document. If the Chairman does not accord the necessary permission to do so, it shall be returned to the member and the fact will be indicated in the printed debates.

Details of time taken on various matters in each of the sessions is given in the accompanying Table.

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<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
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<td>Subject</td>
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<td>Homage/Felicitation</td>
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