

LEADER OF THE HOUSE

F. No. RS. 17/5/2005-R & L

© RAJYA SABHA SECRETARIAT, NEW DELHI

<http://parliamentofindia.nic.in>

<http://rajyasabha.nic.in>

E-mail: rsrlib@sansad.nic.in



**RAJYA SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI**

PUBLISHED BY SECRETARY-GENERAL, RAJYA SABHA AND
PRINTED BY MANAGER, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA PRESS,
MINTO ROAD, NEW DELHI-110002.

PREFACE

This booklet is part of the Rajya Sabha Practice and Procedure Series which seeks to describe, in brief, the importance, duties and functions of the Leader of the House. The booklet is intended to serve as a handy guide for ready reference. The information contained in it is synoptic and not exhaustive.

New Delhi
February, 2005

DR. YOGENDRA NARAIN
Secretary-General

THE LEADER OF THE HOUSE

Importance of the Office

There are quite a few functionaries in Parliament who render members' participation in debates more real, effective and meaningful. One of them is the 'Leader of the House'. The Leader of the House is an important parliamentary functionary who exercises direct influence on the course of parliamentary business.

Origin of Office in England

In England, one of the members of the Government, who is primarily responsible to the Prime Minister for the arrangement of the government business in the House of Commons, is known as the Leader of the House. It is neither a statutory office nor is the Leader formally appointed by the Crown. The office of Leader of the House is usually held alongwith another office. Until 1942, the Prime Minister, if he was a member of the House of Commons, also acted as the Leader of the House. It has, however, now become the regular practice in England to have a Minister of the Crown in the House of Commons specially appointed by the Prime Minister as the Leader of the House. Similarly, in the House of Lords, the conduct of Government business is entrusted to the Leader of the House, who is appointed by the Prime Minister and is a Member of the Cabinet.

Leader of the House in Rajya Sabha

Rule 2(1) of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Council of States (Rajya Sabha) defines the Leader of Rajya Sabha as follows:

"Leader of the Council" means the Prime Minister, if he is a member of the Council, or a Minister who is a member of the Council and is nominated by the Prime Minister to function as the Leader of the Council.

In Rajya Sabha, the following members have served as the Leaders of the House since 1952:

Name	Period
1	2
1. Shri N. Gopaldaswami Ayyangar	May 1952 to February 1953
2. Shri Charu Chandra Biswas	February 1953 to November 1954
3. Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri	November 1954 to March 1955
4. Shri Govind Ballabh Pant	March 1955 to February 1961
5. Hafiz Mohammad Ibrahim	February 1961 to August 1963

1	2
6. Shri Yashwantrao Balwantrao Chavan	August 1963 to December 1963
7. Shri Jaisukhlal Hathi	February 1964 to March 1964
8. Shri Mahomed Ali Currim Chagla	March 1964 to November 1967
9. Shri Jaisukhlal Hathi	November 1967 to November 1969
10. Shri Kodardas Kalidas Shah	November 1969 to May 1971
11. Shri Uma Shankar Dikshit	May 1971 to December 1975
12. Shri Kamalapati Tripathi	December 1975 to March 1977
13. Shri Lal K. Advani	March 1977 to August 1979
14. Shri K.C. Pant	August 1979 to January 1980
15. Shri Pranab Mukherjee	January 1980 to July 1981 and August 1981 to December 1984
16. Shri Vishwanath Pratap Singh	December 1984 to April 1987

1	2
17. Shri Narayan Datt Tiwari	April 1987 to June 1988
18. Shri P. Shiv Shanker	July 1988 to November 1989
19. Shri M.S. Gurupadaswamy	December 1989 to November 1990
20. Shri Yashwant Sinha	December 1990 to June 1991
21. Shri S.B. Chavan	July 1991 to April 1996
22. Shri Sikander Bakht	May 20, 1996 to May 31, 1996
23. Shri Inder Kumar Gujral	June 1996 to November 1996
24. Shri H.D. Deve Gowda	November 1996 to April 1997
25. Shri Inder Kumar Gujral	April 1997 to March 1998
26. Shri Sikander Bakht	March 1998 to October 1999
27. Shri Jaswant Singh	October 1999 to May 2004
28. Dr. Manmohan Singh	June 2004-

Duties and functions

According to Gladstone, the Leader of the House suggests, and to a great degree, fixes the course of all principal matters of business, supervises and keeps in harmony the actions of his colleagues, takes initiative in matters of ceremonial procedure, and advises the House in every difficulty as it arises.

The arrangement of the government business is the ultimate responsibility of the Leader of the House, though the details are settled, subject to his approval, by the Chief Whip. The Leader of the House draws up the programme of official business to be transacted in a session of Parliament. He fixes priorities for various items of business to ensure their smooth passage. In Rajya Sabha, he is also associated with the Business Advisory Committee so that his valuable advice may be available to the Committee to draw the time-schedule of the business before the House. He shapes the course and content of legislation in as much as his is often the final voice in deciding as to what amendments will be acceptable, which private member's Bill will receive support of the Government, and whether a question should be left to a free vote.

The Leader of the House deals with procedural matters relating to the business of the House and tenders his advice whenever required. For that purpose, he is usually present either in the House or in his room in the

Parliament House and has the right to address the House whenever he likes. There are a number of other areas in which the Leader of the House is assigned a prominent role. He is available to the Presiding Officer for consultation on behalf of the Government. He is consulted by the Chair in regard to the arrangement of government business and allotment of days for allocation of time for discussion on matters referred to in the President's Address under article 87(1) of the Constitution, transaction of private members' business on any day other than a Friday, which is normally fixed for private members' business, discussion on No-Day-Yet-Named Motion, Short Duration Discussion, etc. As a matter of convention, the Leader of the House is generally consulted when a motion for suspension of a member from the service of the House is moved.

In his day-to-day activities, the Leader of the House acts as the leader of his party, but on occasions, he acts as the spokesman and representative of the whole House. Such occasions may be when the House as a whole desires to define its position towards some external body, as in the case of a difference with the other House or where there is some complaint of breach of privilege of the House against any outside body or agency or when it is desired to give expression to the feelings of the House on some event of importance at home or abroad. When the House speaks as a collective body, the Leader of the House speaks on its behalf.

The responsibility of the Leader of the House is not only to the Government and its supporters in the House, but to the Opposition and to the House as a whole. He maintains liaison between the Government and the Opposition groups in the House. He is the guardian of the legitimate rights of the Opposition as well as those of the Government. As such, he should be among the foremost champions of the rights and privileges of the House as a whole. He has to see that the House is not denied its rightful opportunities despite pressure from any quarters.

Conclusion

Gladstone has rightly suggested that the Leader of the House is more than a manager. He is not merely the leader of his party and the leader of the Government but also the Leader of the House. He is an active representative on behalf of the House when some important event of national or international importance takes place. Because of the important role which the Leader of the House performs, the House holds him in high esteem. The House looks to him for guidance when in difficulty, to lead it in a critical eventuality and to steer it through crisis, if any.