

## **PREFACE**

This publication seeks to provide an introduction to the committee system in the second chamber of Indian Parliament i.e. Council of States, popularly called as 'Rajya Sabha'. It describes briefly the mandate as well as the work done by the Committees of Rajya Sabha individually. As regards the Department-related Standing Committees on which members of both Houses are represented; only those ones have been included which are functioning under the direction and control of the Chairman, Rajya Sabha.

This Publication, it is hoped would be found interesting and useful to the readers.

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## **COMMITTEE SYSTEM IN RAJYA SABHA** **(1952-2002)**

### **Introduction**

A legislature, apart from approving draft legislations and policies put forth by the government, also performs another important function of keeping surveillance over the executive. It has, therefore, to ensure that the executive acts in conformity with the tenets of policies approved and within the financial and administrative powers conferred on the government by Parliament. In view of the increasing magnitude and complexity of modern administration, however, effective monitoring and scrutiny of executive actions by Parliament has become difficult today. Houses of Parliament, in fact, do not have enough time for the efficient discharge of these functions. Therefore, Parliaments the world over have devised a 'Committee System' to assist them in performing their duties in an effective and efficient manner. Parliamentary Committees, in fact, work as 'mini legislatures' helping Parliament in scrutinizing legislative as well as executive actions.

Parliamentary Committees, in fact, act as a link between Parliament and people on the one hand, and between the administration and Parliament on the other. In a Parliamentary set up, peoples' interaction with Parliament is not direct, it is through the representatives elected by them. Similarly, administration's accountability to Parliament

is also not direct; it is through the Ministers who have to answer for anything done or not done by the Departments looked after by them. In the Committees, however, Secretaries of the Ministries/Departments appear personally for giving evidence in regard to matters under consideration. Similarly, peoples' interaction with the Committees is made possible when written memoranda are invited from the general public or the representatives/experts from various bodies, organizations or interests affected by the issues or measures under consideration of the Committee or when they are invited to tender oral evidence before the Committees. The Committees also make on-the-spot visits, if necessary, with a view to obtaining first hand information in respect of the issues under their consideration. The Committees prepare their reports, after making in-depth examination of issues, which contain its suggestions/recommendations to be implemented by the government. The concerned Department of the government then submits a note to the Committee about the action taken by it on the recommendations as also explaining reasons, if any of the recommendations are not implemented. If the Committee is not satisfied by the explanation given by the Department, it may submit an Action-taken Report to the House.

The Parliamentary Committees thus mainly perform legislative scrutiny and ensure accountability of the executive to Parliament. Committees, in fact, while doing so do not bully or weaken the administration but try to prevent misuse of power exercisable by the executive. Parliamentary control in this context means "influence, not direct control; advise, not command; criticism, not obstruction, scrutiny, not initiative, accountability, not prior approval". This in brief is the foundation on which Committee system rests.

### **Committees in Rajya Sabha**

The Rajya Sabha also has an elaborate system of its Committees. Their functioning is regulated by the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business and Directions given by the Chairman, Rajya Sabha from time to time. Parliamentary Committees in Rajya Sabha may be categorized as (i) *ad hoc* Committees and (ii) Standing Committees.

#### *Adhoc Committees*

*Ad hoc* Committees are constituted by the House on a motion adopted in that behalf, or by the Chairman, Rajya Sabha to enquire into specific matters. They cease to function as soon as they complete their task and submit a report to the House. *Ad hoc* Committees may be either Select Committees- consisting of Members of only one House or the Joint Committee - having members from both Houses. These are appointed to consider Bills or any other issue/document referred to them by the House and submit a report to the House.

#### *Standing Committees*

Standing Committees, on the other hand, are of two categories. Standing Committees of the House; and the Department Related Standing Committees.

The Standing Committees of the first category may be put in terms of the nature of their functions as follows:

**1. Committees to enquire-**

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

**2. Committees to scrutinise and control-**

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

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

- (a) Business Advisory Committee,
- (b) Rules Committee.

**4. House Keeping Committees-**

- (a) House Committee,
- (b) General Purposes Committee,
- (c) Committee on Provision of Computers to Members of Rajya Sabha.
- (d) Committee on Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme.

There are some financial Committees of the Lok Sabha with which members of the Rajya Sabha are associated. These are:

- (a) Committee on Public Accounts,
- (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) Railway Convention Committee: The Committee to review the rate of dividend payable by the Railway Undertaking to the General Revenues.

Member of the Rajya Sabha are also represented on the *Parliamentary Library Committee*.

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 Salary, Allowances and Pension of Members of Parliament Act, 1954.

The members of Rajya Sabha also serve on the *Committee on Offices of Profit* and the *Committee on the Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes*. The proportion of number of members of the two Houses on these Committees is in the ratio of 2 members of the Lok Sabha to 1 of the Rajya Sabha.

Following is the list of House Standing Committees functioning in the Rajya Sabha:

	<b>Name of the Committees</b>	<b>No. of Members in the Committee</b>
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	7
10	Ethics Committee	10
11	Committee on Provision of Computers for Members of Rajya Sabha	7
12	Committee on Members of Parliament Local Area	10

Normally these committees are re-constituted every year but every Committee continues to hold office until a new Committee is nominated.

A brief introduction of each of these Committees has been given below:

(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 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 and is then notified in Rajya Sabha Parliamentary Bulletin Part-11.

(2) ***Committee on Papers Laid on the Table***

A number of official papers are required to be laid by the Government on the Table of the House every day while it is in session. This Committee was set up in 1982 to see whether (a) there has been compliance with the laws, rules or regulations in pursuance of which the papers have been laid; (b) there has been any unreasonable delay in laying the papers and if so, whether a statement explaining the reasons for such delay has also been laid before the House alongwith the papers, and whether those reasons are satisfactory; and (c) the papers have been laid before the House both in English and Hindi and if not, whether a statement explaining the reasons for not laying the papers in Hindi has also been laid along with the papers and whether those reasons were 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 which are forwarded

to the concerned Department for taking necessary action and submitting 'action-taken notes' to the Committee.

Following table provides an over-view of the work done by the Committee since its inception in the year 1982.

Year	No. of meetings held	No. of reports presented
1982	20	5
1983	35	6
1984	26	5
1985	20	7
1986	16	6
1987	16	5
1988	10	1
1989	11	3
1990	15	-
1991	26	3
1992	26	4
1993	14	5
1994	24	3
1995	18	-
1996	5	1
1997	7	2
1998	15	12
1999	19	4
2000	5	3
2001	5	3
2002	9	8

**(3) *Committee on Petitions***

Citizens have a right to submit a representation to Parliament for the redressal of any of their grievances. The function of this Committee is to

examine every petition referred to it, and to report to the House on the specific complaint made in the petition after hearing such authorities 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 which are forwarded to the concerned Department for taking necessary action and submitting 'action taken notes' to the Committee.

The Committee on Petitions during the period of its existence has upto now presented a total of 116 Reports.

Years	No. of meetings held	No. of Reports presented.
1952-61	13	13
1962-71	105	16
1972-81	283	42
1982-91	338	27
1992-01	174	19*
2002	4	-

\* Includes both Interim and Final Reports which the Committee had presented as part of its 112<sup>th</sup> Report.

**(4) *Committee of Privileges***

Members of Parliament individually and the Houses thereof collectively enjoy certain immunities and privileges necessary for enabling them to function without any let or hinderance. This Committee is there to examine cases of alleged breach of these privileges. The Committee examines every question of breach of parliamentary privileges referred to it 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 presents its report to the House which has to take a final decision for giving effect to the recommendations made by the Committee.

(5) ***Committee on Rules***

The Committee considers matter of procedure and conduct of business of 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/her 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/her 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/her 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***

Besides certain provisions of the Constitution, Acts passed by Parliament require the Departments of the government to frame the detailed rules, regulations etc. for giving effect to policies or directives contained in the Acts. Framing of such rules etc. by the executive is known as Subordinate or delegated legislation. Function of the Committee on Subordinate Legislation is to scrutinize and report to Rajya Sabha whether the powers to make such rules, regulations, bye-laws etc. have been properly exercised within the powers so delegated. The Committee examines the rules, regulations, bye-laws, etc. so framed, irrespective of the fact whether these are required to be laid before the House or not. It particularly considers: (a) whether it is in accordance with the general objects of the Constitution or the principal 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.

Following table provide an overview of the quantum of work done by the Committee since its inception.

S.No.	Year	No. of Meetings held	No. of reports presented
1.	1964	1	0
2.	1965	1	0
3.	1966	1	1
4.	1967	4	2
5.	1968	5	2
6.	1969	4	2
7.	1970	7	1
8.	1971	8	3
9.	1972	7	2
10.	1973	22	2

11.	1974	12	2
12.	1975	12	1
13.	1976	23	4
14.	1977	28	4
15.	1978	23	4
16.	1979	15	2
17.	1980	38	12
18.	1981	57	4
19.	1982	34	2
20.	1983	43	8
21.	1984	34	6
22.	1985	22	4
23.	1986	15	2
24.	1987	32	4
25.	1988	9	2
26.	1989	21	3
27.	1990	14	5
28.	1991	25	9
29.	1992	22	5
30.	1993	24	2
31.	1994	15	3
32.	1995	10	9
33.	1996	4	0
34.	1997	9	3
35.	1998	16	8
36.	1999	17	3
37.	2000	11	5
38.	2001	14	6
39.	2002	11	8

(7) *Committee on Government Assurances*

This Committee was set up on 1 July, 1972 with the mandate (a) to scrutinise the assurances; promises, undertakings, etc. given by the Ministers from time to time on the floor of the House during Question Hour or 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 on which the concerned Department submits an 'action taken note ' to the House.

Since its inception in July 1972, it has presented in all fifty five reports to the House so far. Quantum of work done by it is sought to be shown in the following table.

Year	No. of Meetings held	No. of reports presented
1972	05	01
1973	17	02
1974	19	02
1975	22	01
1976	19	01
1977	19	02
1978	23	03
1979	27	01

1980	35	03
1981	51	04
1982	39	02
1983	34	02
1984	32	02
1985	22	02
1986	26	02
1987	42	02
1988	27	01
1989	41	02
1990	34	01
1991	29	01
1992	18	01
1993	36	01
1994	15	01
1995	16	01
1996	12	01
1997	16	01
1998	12	03
1999	15	03
2000	09	03
2001	09	02
2002	07	02

(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 the House and such other members as may be nominated

by the Chairman, Rajya Sabha. 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 its Chairman from time to time. Although this Committee is functioning for a long time, it was included in the Rules of Procedure of Rajya Sabha only recently in July, 2000.

#### 9. *House Committee*

The functions of the Committee are (a) to deal with all questions relating to the allotment of residential accommodation to members of Rajya Sabha, and to exercise supervision over facilities and other amenities given to members in their residences and hostels in Delhi/New Delhi; and (b) 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.

The House Committee during the period of its existence has upto now presented the following reports:-

Report No.	Subject	Date of adoption	Date of presentation in the House
Ist	House Committee	6.8.1986	7.8.1986
2 <sup>nd</sup>	House Committee	23.12.1993	29.12.1993
3 <sup>rd</sup>	House Committee	14.12.1995	22.12.1995
4 <sup>th</sup>	House Committee	12.3.1997	14.3.1997
5 <sup>th</sup>	House Committee	2.3.2000	7.3.2000
6 <sup>th</sup>	House Committee	by circulation	9.8.2001
7 <sup>th</sup>	House Committee Report on study tour on uses of solar energy	20.2.2002	7.3.2002
8 <sup>th</sup>	House Committee	7.8.2002	12.8.2002

#### 10. *Ethics Committee*

The Ethics Committee of Rajya Sabha was constituted by the Chairman, Rajya Sabha on 4 March 1997, with the mandate to oversee the moral and ethical conduct of members and to examine cases referred to it with reference to ethical and other misconduct of members. In respect of procedure and other matters, the rules applicable to the Committee of Privileges apply to the Ethics Committee with such variations and modifications as the Chairman, Rajya Sabha may make, till the rules relating to this Committee have been adopted. Leaders of political parties/groups in Rajya Sabha are nominated as the members of the Ethics Committee. The Chairman of the Committee is nominated by the Chairman, Rajya Sabha from among its members. The Committee is an in-house mechanism for ensuring standard of behaviour by the members of the House. It has submitted three reports so far. The Committee has laid down a Code of Conduct for the Members of Rajya Sabha.

**11. *Committee on Provision of Computers to Members of Rajya Sabha***

This Committee was constituted by the Chairman, Rajya Sabha on 18 March 1997. 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. Under this scheme, a member has been empowered to recommend projects/works of development in the districts selected by them to be executed by the concerned district administration. 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 end in view, a ten-

member Committee was constituted in Rajya Sabha on 5 September 1998. The Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha is the Chairman of this Committee.

Committee on MPLADS during the period of its existence has upto now presented the following reports:

Year	No. of meetings held	No. of reports presented
1998	2	
1999	3	First report presented on 23 <sup>rd</sup> December, 1999
2000	6	
2001	7	Second Report presented on 11 <sup>th</sup> December, 2001  Third Report presented on 18 <sup>th</sup> December, 2001
2002	8	Fourth Report presented on 17 <sup>th</sup> December, 2002

## **DEPARTMENT-RELATED PARLIAMENTARY STANDING COMMITTEES**

### **Origin**

Need for ensuring greater accountability of the government to Parliament was being felt in India for a long time for which many proposals were put forth. One such proposal was to further strengthening the Committee system for making parliamentary scrutiny more extensive and effective. Accordingly, three subject-based Committees namely, the Committee on Agriculture; Committee on Science & Technology; and the Committee on Environment and Forests were created in 1989. Encouraged by the experience of these Committees, seventeen Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committees were constituted on 8 April 1993, six of which function under the direction

and control of the Chairman, Rajya Sabha and eleven function under the Speaker, Lok Sabha.

At the formal inauguration of the Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee System on 31 March 1993, the then Vice-President of India and the Chairman, Rajya Sabha, Shri K.R.Narayanan\* said that the purpose of these Committees would be:

"... 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."

### **Composition**

Each Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee has 45 members, 30 members drawn from Lok Sabha and 15 from Rajya Sabha. A Minister cannot be nominated as a member of these Committees. Members of the Committee hold office for a term not exceeding one year. The Chairmen of these Committees are appointed by the Chairman, Rajya Sabha or the Speaker, Lok Sabha, as the case may be.

### **Functions**

All the Departments/Ministries of the Government of India have been put under these seventeen Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committees which have been assigned the following functions:

- (i) 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 motion;
- (ii) 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;
- (iii) to consider the annual reports of the Ministries/Departments and report thereon; and



- (iv) 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.

Before these Committees came into being, Annual Budget of the Government of India was being discussed and approved every year by the entire House. Due to paucity of time, Demand for Grants of only a few Ministries/Departments could be taken up by the House. Most part of the Budget every year was being 'guillotined' *i.e.* approved without any discussion thereon. It was inviting lot of criticism by media and public at large. Department-related Committees, therefore, were empowered *inter alia* to discuss the Demand for Grants of the Ministries/Departments under them and make a report to the House. Houses of Parliament, therefore, are adjourned for some period, after the Annual Budget has been presented, with a view to enabling these Committees to consider Demands for Grants of the Ministries/Departments under them. They present their reports to the Houses within a specified time - one separate report on the demands of each Ministry/Department.

These reports are sent thereafter to the respective Ministries/Departments for implementing the suggestion or recommendations of the Committee. The Departments/Ministries have to submit an action-taken note to the Committee and the Committee may submit an Action Taken Report containing the points on which it is not satisfied by the governments' response.

Reports of the Committees are based on broad consensus. If a member does not agree on any aspect contained in the report, he may append a note of dissent to that effect. A Committee does not ordinarily consider matters, which fall within the purview of any other Committee. Reports of the Department-related Standing Committees have persuasive value and are treated as considered advice. These Standing Committees do not consider matters of day-to-day administration of the related Ministries/Departments.

The list of the seventeen Department-related Standing Committees is as follows:

### Rajya Sabha

1. Committee on Commerce
2. Committee on Home Affairs
3. Committee on Human Resource Development
4. Committee on Industry
5. Committee on Science & Technology, Environment & Forests
6. Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture

### Lok Sabha

1. Committee on Agriculture
2. Committee on Communications
3. Committee on Defence
4. Committee on Energy
5. Committee on External Affairs
6. Committee on Finance
7. Committee on Food, Civil Supplies and Public Distribution
8. Committee on Labour & Welfare
9. Committee on Petroleum & Chemicals
10. Committee on Railways
11. Committee on Urban and Rural Development

Given below are the Department-related Committees which are working with the overall direction and control of the Chairman, Rajya Sabha. Secretarial assistance to these Committees is provided by the Rajya Sabha Secretariat. Other Committees are with the Lok Sabha Secretariat.

### **Ministries/Departments under the purview of the Department-related**

### Parliamentary Standing Committees in Rajya Sabha

Sl. No.	Name of Committee	Ministries/Departments
1.	Committee on Commerce	1. Commerce: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Commerce</li> <li>- Industrial Policy &amp; Promotion</li> </ul> 2. Textiles
2.	Committee on Home Affairs	1. Home Affairs 2. Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions 3. Law, Justice and Company Affairs
3.	Committee on Human Resource Development	1. Human Resource Development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Elementary Education and Literacy</li> <li>- Secondary Education and Higher Education</li> <li>- Women and Child Development</li> </ul> 2. Youth Affairs and Sports  3. Health and Family Welfare: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Health</li> <li>- Family Welfare</li> <li>- Indian Systems of Medicine and Homeopathy</li> </ul>
4.	Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture	1. Road Transport & Highways 2. Shipping 3. Civil Aviation 4. Tourism and Culture: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Tourism</li> <li>- Culture</li> </ul>
5.	Ministry of Industry	1. Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises 2. Steel 3. Small Scale Industries 4. Agro & Rural Industries 5. Department of Mines
6.	Committee on Science & Technology and Environment & Forests	1. Environment and Forests 2. Science and Technology: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Science and Technology</li> <li>- Scientific and Industrial Research</li> <li>- Biotechnology</li> </ul> 3. Department of Ocean

		Development 4. Department of Space
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### **\_(1) Department Related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Human Resource Development**

The Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Human Resource Development covers the functioning of (i) Ministry of Human Resource Development, (ii) Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and (iii) Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.

The Ministry of Human Resource Development comprises the (i) Department of Elementary Education and Literacy, (ii) Department of Secondary and Higher Education and (iii) Department of Women and Child Development.

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare comprises the (i) Department of Health, (ii) Department of Family Welfare and (iii) Department of Indian Systems of Medicine and Homeopathy (ISM&H). Thus the Committee on Human Resource Development (HRD), as it is popularly known, has seven Departments under its purview.

The Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Human Resource Development has had four Chairmen so far since its inception in 1993. Shri Ram Naresh Yadav, former Chief Minister of U.P. was its first Chairman. Followed by Shri P. Upendra, former Minister of Information and Broadcasting and Shri S.B.Chavan, former Chief Minister of Maharashtra and a former Union Home Minister. Currently, Shri Arjun Singh, a former Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh and a former Minister of Human Resource Development is the Chairman of the Committee.

The Committee has so far presented a total of 122 Reports, out of which 63 Reports related to Demands for Grants of Ministries/Departments under the Committee; 12 Reports pertained to Bills; 25 Reports are on action-taken notes received from the government; and 22 Reports related to various issues or subjects taken up for special study. Among the various issue-based Reports, Reports on 'India's Performance in International Sports', Functioning of Central Government Hospitals, Central Government Health Scheme, Problem of Drop-outs, Adult Education, Vocational Education, Value

Based Education, Medical Education and Technical Education are of significant importance.

The following table gives a brief account of the number of meetings held by the Committee, year-wise, along with the duration of the meetings and Reports presented:

Year	No. of meetings held	Duration of the meetings		No. of Reports presented
		Hrs.	Mts.	
1993	21	42	30	4
1994	44	132	45	10
1995	38	138	25	20
1996	18	55	30	18
1997	15	47	5	11
1998	14	67	25	17
1999	10	38	45	8
2000	17	55	35	9
2001	18	62	00	16
2002*	22	41	20	9
<i>Source:</i> Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on HRD				
* As on 2 December 2002				

## (2) Department Related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism & Culture

The Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism & Culture from the beginning had three Ministries namely, Surface Transport, Civil Aviation and Tourism under its jurisdiction. Since 25 August 2000, the Department of Culture has also formed a part of the Ministry of Tourism and Culture and has been brought within the purview of the Committee *vide* the Rajya Sabha Parliamentary Bulletin Part-II, dated 25 August 2000. The Ministry of Surface Transport has been further bifurcated into two separate Ministries namely, Ministry of Road Transport & Highways and Ministry of Shipping with effect from 17 November 2000. Thus, there are currently four Ministries within the purview of the Committee which are: (i) Ministry of Road Transport & Highways, (ii) Ministry of Shipping, (iii) Ministry of Civil Aviation and (iv) Ministry of Tourism and Culture. The Ministry of Tourism and Culture comprise two Departments: (a) Department of Tourism and (b) Department of Culture.

Shri Pramod Mahajan, presently the Minister of Information Technology, Parliamentary Affairs, and Communications, was the first Chairman of the Committee. Shri Sunder Singh Bhandari, now the Governor of Gujarat, followed him as the Chairman. Shri V.K. Malhotra, Md. Salim and Shri Khagen Das, all senior members

have succeeded one after another as Chairmen of the Committee. Presently it is headed by Shri Dipankar Mukherjee.

The Committee while examining a Bill like any other Committee, takes evidence of the officials of the concerned Ministry and any other organization which may be interested in the Bill. The Committee may invite suggestions and hear the representatives of the non-government organizations (NGOs), private agencies and individuals. The Committee also takes the advice of the Ministry of Law, Justice and Company Affairs on the Bill. The Committee, thereafter, undertakes a clause-by-clause consideration of the Bill and presents its Report to both Houses of Parliament. So far, thirteen Bills have been referred to the Committee on Transport, Tourism & Culture for examination and report and it has presented Reports on twelve Bills. Out of the three Bills referred to the Committee during the year 2001, the Committee had finalised its report on two Bills which were presented to Parliament. The one remaining Bill is still under consideration of the Committee.

The Committee has so far presented a total of 61 reports, out of which 32 reports related to Demands for Grants of various Departments under the Committee, 12 reports pertained to the Bills referred to it and 17 reports related to important issues or subjects concerning its mandate. The Committee often selects specific subjects for examination and report. During its existence, the Committee has taken up for consideration various issues/policies of the government and has presented reports thereon to both Houses of Parliament. Some of these reports are : Privatisation Policy in regard to Major Ports (20<sup>th</sup> Report), Problems faced by Tourists/Passengers at the Airports in the Country (40<sup>th</sup> Report), Disinvestment of Air India (44<sup>th</sup> Report) and Chartering and Management of Flights for Haj pilgrims (46<sup>th</sup> Report). In order to give wide publicity to the Committee's Reports on "Problems faced by Tourists/Passengers at the Airports in the Country", "Disinvestment of Air India" and "Chartering and Management of Flights for Haj Pilgrims," a press release was issued in respect of each of the reports. These reports after being reported in media, drew a lot of attention from the government as well as from the general public. Many of the recommendations/observations contained in these reports have been accepted/implemented by the government.

A brief account of the meetings held by the Committee, year-wise, along with the duration of the meetings and the number of reports presented are given below in a tabular form:

Year	No. of meetings held	Duration of the meetings		No. of Reports presented
		Hrs.	Mts.	
1993	19	57	00	4
1994	24	50	00	7
1995	19	37	35	8
1996	17	34	35	6
1997	14	29	00	5
1998	21	40	30	4
1999	12	24	55	5
2000	21	40	10	7
2001	15	29	05	8
2002	20	32	25	7
<i>Source:</i> Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture				

### (3) Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Industry

The Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Industry currently, has five Ministries/Departments within its purview. These are: (i) Ministry of Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises, (ii) Ministry of Steel, (iii) Department of Mines, (iv) Ministry of Small Scale Industries and (v) Ministry of Agro & Rural Industries. The Ministry of Small Scale Industries and the Ministry of Agro & Rural Industries had been recently bifurcated into two Ministries.

The first Chairman of the Committee, Shri Moturu Hanumantha Rao was a senior member from the State of Andhra Pradesh who was followed by a well known economist from West Bengal, Shri Ashok Mitra. He has been the longest serving Chairman so far. Subsequent Chairmen Shri Raghavji and Shri Ramdas Agarwal were senior members from Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan respectively. Shri T.N.Chaturvedi, a former Comptroller and Auditor-General of India who headed this Committee was subsequently appointed as Governor of Karnataka. The Committee is currently chaired by Dr.P.C.Alexander, former Governor of Maharashtra who had earlier served as Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister late Smt. Indira Gandhi.

Till date, the Committee has presented a total of 75 reports, of which 29 related to Demand for Grants, 5 pertained to Bills, 26 to action-taken notes and 15 to important issues selected by the Committee. The Committee has been taking up various issues/policies of the government for consideration and report. Some of the interesting reports presented in this category were :

- (i) Status of Mini-Steel plants
- (ii) Status of Sponge Iron Industries
- (iii) Bharat Gold Mines Ltd.
- (iv) Industrial Growth - trends and problems
- (v) Industrialization of backward areas and the state of capital goods sector
- (vi) Industrial situation
- (vii) Problems being faced by steel industry (both in public and private sectors)
- (viii) The working of 'Rural Employment Generation Programme' and 'Prime Minister's Rozgar Yojana'
- (ix) PSUs of Department of Heavy Industry- Disinvestment, Sickness, Revival
- (x) Credit flow to small scale industries
- (xi) Performance review of BYNL Group of Companies
- (xii) Modernisation, restructuring and expansion programmes of NALCO.

Many of the recommendations/observations contained in these reports have been accepted/implemented by the government. Besides presenting the reports to Parliament in regard to the above subjects, the Committee has helped many of the ailing Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs), on the verge of closure, by providing much needed succor in the form of work orders for them from the government Departments. The Committee, in fact, has not only executed its role efficiently but has also helped to ensure the revival and survival of sick PSUs, and consequently, the job-security of many employees working in them.



A brief account of the meetings held in the Committee, year-wise, along with the duration of the meetings and the number of Reports presented are given below:

Year	No. of meetings held	Duration of the meetings		No. of Reports presented
		Hrs.	Mts.	
1993	42	117	30	05
1994	35	65	30	08
1995	15	19	00	04
1996	22	52	10	05
1997	03	16	55	-
1998	08	27	40	07
1999	06	24	30	03
2000	21	49	50	12
2001	16	34	30	19
2002	10	26	45	12

*Source:* Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Industry

#### (4) Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Commerce

Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Commerce comprises the (i) Ministry of Textiles and (ii) Ministry of Commerce along with the Department of Commerce and Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion.

In the year 2000, the Committee had constituted three Sub-Committees namely, (i) Sub-Committee on Commerce and Supply, (ii) Sub-Committee on Textiles and (iii) Sub-Committee on Industrial Policy and Promotion. It had also constituted a Core Group on World Trade Organisation (WTO). But in 2001, the name of the Sub-Committee on Commerce and Supply was changed to Sub-Committee on Commerce thereby deleting 'Supply' on account of the latter being merged with the Department of Commerce.

Shri Inder Kumar Gujral, who was the first Chairman of the Committee, later became the Prime Minister of India. He was followed by the former Finance Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, Shri Ashok Mitra, an economist of repute and Shri Sikander Bakht, a senior leader. Currently, Shri Kailash Joshi, a former Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh is heading this Committee.

The Committee on Commerce, has presented so far a total number of 53 reports to both Houses of Parliament, out of which 30 reports pertained to Demands for Grants of

the respective Ministries/Departments, 5 reports on different Bills and 18 reports pertained to special subjects.

A brief record of the meetings held in the Committee, year-wise, along with the duration of the meetings and the number of reports presented are given below in a tabular form:

Year	No. of meetings held	Duration of the meetings		No. of Reports presented
		Hrs.	Mts.	
1993	40	95	35	02
1994	36	59		06
1995	56	90		09
1996	30	52		10
1997	16	21		04
1998	34	47	50	06
1999	12	20	20	03
2000	28	65	50	05
2001	16	40	25	03
2002	12	19	25	04
<i>Source:</i> Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Commerce				

#### (5) Department Related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs

The Committee on Home Affairs is presently dealing with rather sensitive and important Ministries/Departments namely, the Ministries of (i) Home Affairs; (ii) Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions; (iii) Law and Justice; and (iv) Development of North Eastern Region.

Shri M.M. Jacob, the first Chairman of this Committee was a former Union Minister and a Governor. He was succeeded by Shri Madhav Singh Solanki, former Chief Minister of Gujarat and a former Minister of External Affairs, Shri Rajni Ranjan Sahu and Shri Som Pal, senior members. Presently, Shri Pranab Mukherjee, former Finance Minister, has been serving as Chairman for a long time.

The Committee till date has presented 97 reports in all. Out of these, 54 reports are on Bills, 28 reports on Demands for Grants, 8 reports on general subjects and 7 reports on action-taken replies given by the Government. It has thus the distinction of considering the largest number of Bills as compared to other Department-related Committees of Rajya Sabha.

The recommendations/observations made by the Committee in its various reports have evoked positive response from the Government. For example, the Committee in its 38<sup>th</sup> Report on Demands for Grants (1997-98) of Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions had recommended for early enactment of the 'Right to Information Act'. Subsequently, the Government introduced the 'Freedom of Information Bill, 2000 on July 25, 2000. This Bill was also examined by the Committee and the report thereon presented to Parliament. The Bill was passed by both Houses of Parliament during the winter session 2002. The Lotteries (Prohibition) Bill, 1999 has also been a sequel to the observations/recommendations of the Committee contained in its 42<sup>nd</sup> Report on the Lotteries (Regulation) Bill, 1998. Similarly, the Committee examined the *Lokpal Bill*, 1996 and presented its 40<sup>th</sup> Report thereon to Parliament. The Government accepted most of its observations/recommendations therein and brought out a revised Bill, namely the *Lokpal Bill*, 1998 which was again referred to the Committee for examination and report. Subsequently, the Committee presented its 50<sup>th</sup> Report on the Bill and presented the same to Parliament. The Bill was again revised in the light of the observations/recommendations of the Committee and *Lokpal Bill*, 2001 was introduced in Lok Sabha on 14 August 2001. This Bill was also referred to the Committee for examination and the 84<sup>th</sup> Report of the Committee thereon presented to Parliament. Due to the importance of its reports, these have received wide attention in the media and got wide publicity.

Following table provides details regarding number of meetings held year-wise, their duration and number of reports presented so far by the Committee on Home Affairs:

Year	No. of meetings held	Duration of the meetings		No. of Reports presented
		Hrs.	Mts.	
1993	22	39	20	06
1994	37	64	-	08
1995	31	48	45	12
1996	26	56	45	09
1997	28	60	15	05
*1998	26	69	-	09
*1999	17	43	-	07
*2000	45	140	12	10
*2001	53	110	22	17
2002	43	77	39	14

\*The numbers and duration of meetings include those of the Sub-Committees.

Source: Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs.

### **(6) Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Science and Technology, Environment and Forests**

Ministries and Departments that come under the purview of the Committee on Science and Technology, Environment and Forests are: (i) Ministry of Environment and Forests, (ii) Ministry of Science and Technology (which has three Departments *i.e.* Department of Science and Technology; Department of Scientific and Industrial Research; and Department of Biotechnology) and (iii) two independent Departments, namely, Department of Ocean Development and Department of Space.

Shri Syed Sibtey Razi, a former Union Minister, was the first Chairman of the Committee followed by Shri Ajit Jogi, who later became the first Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh. While its fourth Chairman, Shri Pranab Mukherjee was a former Finance Minister of India, the fifth Chairman, Shri S.R.Bomma was a former Chief Minister of Karnataka. Currently, it is headed by another senior member Shri C.Ramachandraiah.

Till date, the Committee has presented 105 reports, out of which 62 were on Demands for Grants; 13 on Annual Reports; 18 were on action-taken notes; 6 were on Bills; and 6 reports were on other important issues.

The following table indicates the number of meetings held by the Committee, year wise, the duration of the meetings and the number of reports presented:

Year	No. of meetings held	Duration of the meetings		No. of Reports presented
		Hrs.	Mts.	
1993	38	60	40	07
1994	31	82	09	10
1995	26	44	45	13
1996	46	78	10	22
1997	08	14	20	-
1998	41	61	15	18
1999	-	-	-	-
2000	35	45	25	13

2001	26	54	05	12
2002	18	30	35	10
<i>Source</i> : Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Science and Technology, Environment and Forests				

The Standing Committee on Science and Technology, Environment and Forests during its existence has touched a wide spectrum of the issues having bearing on the lives of various sections of the society. The recommendations/observations made by the Committee in its various reports have led to the improvement of technology and utilisation of the best talents from the scientific community. The Committee's endeavour has been to impress upon the government to utilise its resources for the betterment of common citizens.

### **Conclusion**

The committee system in Rajya Sabha has functioned quite successfully. The Standing Committees namely, the Committee on Government Assurances, the Committee on Petitions and the Committee on Subordinate Legislation have given recommendations to the government, which have been of far reaching significance. The Committee on Petitions has proved itself to be a valuable instrument for the redress of public grievances. It has established itself as a forum which has brought people nearer to Parliament since the petitions have dealt with a wide range of subjects. For example, number of welfare measures were initiated by the government in pursuance of the recommendations made by the Committee on Petitions for the benefit of tobacco growers, food and vegetable growers, handloom weavers and displaced persons. Likewise, the Committee on Subordinate Legislation has become an effective tool for exercising parliamentary control over executive action. It also keeps a watch on the executive so that it does not exercise arbitrary, unguided and unspecified discretion under any rule. The recommendations of the Committee, in fact, have gone a long way in ensuring the timely framing and laying of the rules, regulations, etc. by the Ministries/Departments. A note containing important recommendations of the Committee was circulated to all the Ministries/Departments in June, 2001 for their

guidance in this area. Violations of these directives are reported to the House regularly by the Committee..

The Department-related Committee System has also influenced the functioning of the Executive in a significant manner. The recommendations made by the Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committees have been of immense importance. For example, the Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Commerce drew attention to several new problems that are likely to come up in the area of foreign trade in the ensuing years. In order to deal with the situation, the Committee recommended the setting up of a permanent quasi-official body consisting of wise judicial minds, state government delegates, economists, agronomists, environmentalists, representatives of socially active non- governmental organisations, fiscal experts, trade specialists, retired diplomats and so on, who could advise the government to deal with these problems. Pursuant to this recommendation of the Committee, an International Trade Advisory Committee has been set up by the government.

It has been found that the Ministries/Departments within the purview of these committees have been quite receptive to their recommendations and have, by and large, accepted them and initiated suitable action for their implementation. There have been very few instances where Ministries/Departments have convincingly expressed their inability to implement the recommendations of the committees. In May 2000, the Information Technology Bill, 2000 was brought before Parliament. The Bill, *inter alia*, sought to give legal sanction to electronic filing, e-mail, etc. and recognised the digital signature. This Bill was referred to the Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Science and Technology, Environment and Forests for examination and report. The Committee studied the Bill in-depth and made about 36 recommendations, out of which, barring the minor recommendations, all were accepted.

These Committees have made parliamentary debates better informed by nourishing the information supply system. The effectiveness of these Committees can be judged on four yardsticks, namely, (i) their success in holding officials to account (ii) publication of information (iii) their effect on the House and the wider public and (iv) their influence on Government's decisions. Going by any of the criteria, one can emphatically say that Department Related Standing committees have proved their

worth. The activities of these Committees have created a "Corpus of knowledge" for members of Parliament and public, which otherwise would not have been possible. The discussion and debates in such Committees and the reports they produce further sharpen government policies.

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\* Shri K.R.Narayanan was later elected the President of India