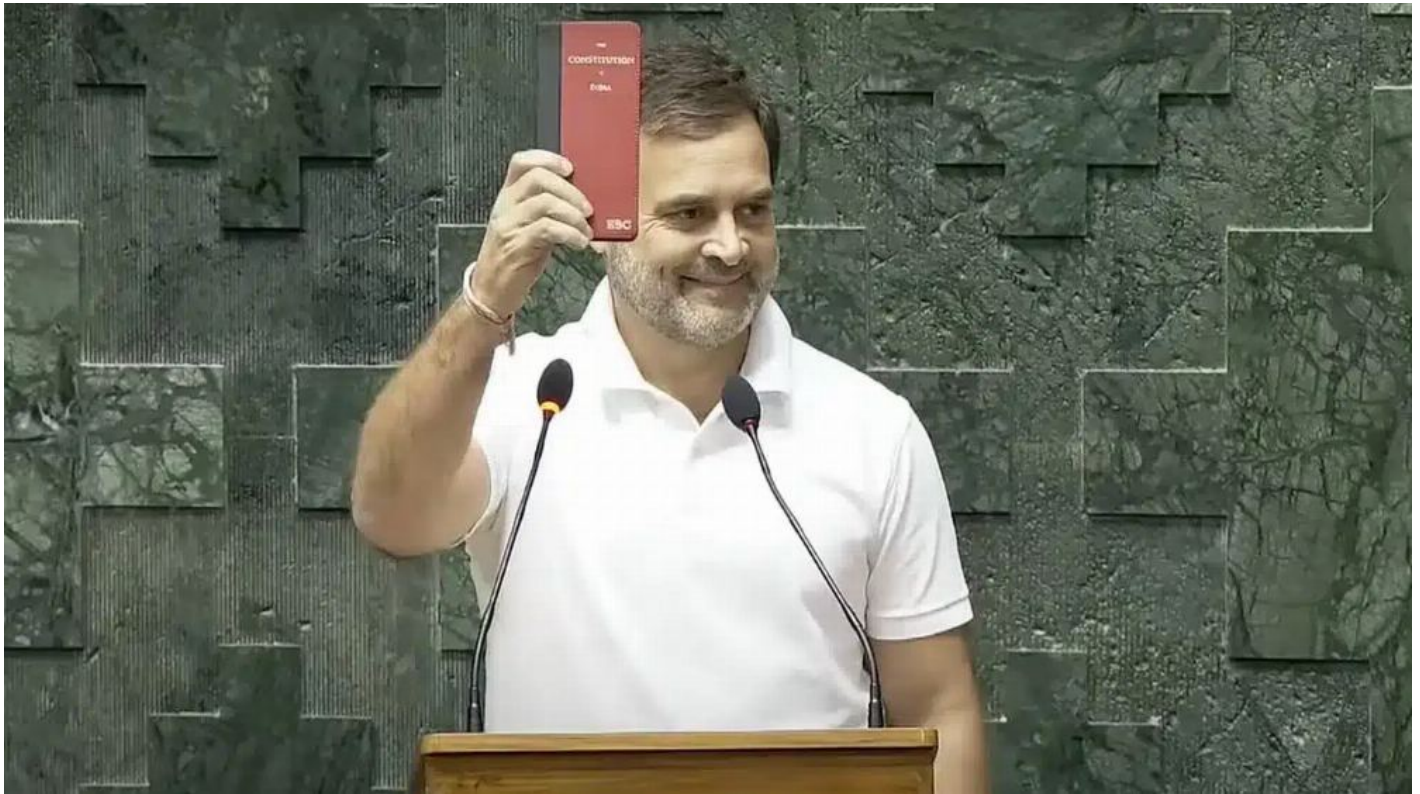


Role of a Lok Sabha's Leader of Opposition

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What's in today's article?

- Why in News?
- The Position of Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha
- Powers of the Leader of Opposition (LoP) in the House

Why in News?

- Congress leader Rahul Gandhi is Leader of Opposition (LoP) in the 18th Lok Sabha, a position that lay vacant for 10 years because no party had numbers equalling a tenth of the strength of the House.
- **The LoP is the parliamentary chairperson** of the largest political party/ coalition in the Lok Sabha that is not in government.

The Position of Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha:

- **Statutory recognition:**
 - It was officially described in **the Salary and Allowances of Leaders of Opposition in Parliament Act 1977**.

- The Act describes the Leader of Opposition as:
 - A member of the Council of States or the House of the People (as the case may be),
 - Who is the Leader in that House of the party (having the greatest numerical strength and recognised as such by the Chairman/ the Speaker) in opposition to the Government.
- **Numerical strength:** According to a conventional understanding, in order to get the post of Leader of Opposition **a party must have at least 10% of MPs** in the House.
- **Debate over numerical strength:**
 - According to the former Lok Sabha Secretary General PDT Achary, the law is clear that the Speaker is required to recognise the leader of the **numerically largest party** in opposition as the leader of opposition.
 - **There is no such rule**, which requires a party to have at least 10% of the members of the House for recognising someone as the Leader of the Opposition.
 - Before the BJP in 2014 and 2019, the Congress (having 415 members in Lok Sabha) in 1984 denied TDP (with 30 MPs) the post of Leader of Opposition, on the basis of the above mysterious rule.
- **Salary and sumptuary allowances:** S/he shall be entitled to receive a salary and allowances as are specified in the Salary, Allowances and Pension of Members of Parliament Act 1954.

Powers of the Leader of Opposition (LoP) in the House:

- **Order of precedence:** The LoP in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha come at No. 7, along with
 - Union Cabinet Ministers,
 - The National Security Advisor,
 - The Principal Secretary to the PM,
 - The Vice-Chairperson of the NITI Aayog,
 - Former PMs, and Chief Ministers.
- **Sitting position in the House:**
 - **The LoP sits in the front row** to the left of the Chair, and enjoys **certain privileges on ceremonial occasions** like escorting the Speaker-elect to the rostrum (Chair of the Speaker).
 - The LoP is also entitled to a seat in the front row during the Address by the President to both Houses of Parliament.
- **The main duty of the LoP:**
 - It is to **serve as the voice of the opposition** in the House and is considered as **a shadow Prime Minister with a shadow Cabinet**.
 - This means, s/he is **ready to take over the administration** if the Government resigns or is defeated on the floor of the House.
 - Because the parliamentary system is based on “**mutual forbearance**” (acknowledging that we do not all have to agree on everything), the LoP is free to disagree while yet allowing the PM to rule.
 - **His/her proactive role** in facilitating smooth functioning of the business of the House is as important as that of the Government.
- **Practical role and responsibility:**
 - Most importantly, the LoP is the **opposition’s representative in the high-powered committees** headed by the PM for appointment to key posts such as

- The Director of CBI,
 - The Central Vigilance Commissioner and Chief Information Commissioner,
 - The Chairperson and Members of the National Human Rights Commission, and
 - The Lokpal.
- She/he will also be a **member of crucial committees**, including Public Accounts, Public Undertakings, Estimates and several Joint Parliamentary Committees.
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Q.1. What is a shadow cabinet?

The shadow cabinet/ ministry is a feature of the Westminster system of government. It consists of a senior group of opposition spokespeople who, under the leadership of the Leader of the Opposition, form an alternative cabinet to that of the government.

Q.2. What role does opposition play in a parliamentary system?

The Opposition's main role is to question the government of the day and hold them accountable to the public. This also helps to fix the mistakes of the Ruling Party.

Source: Leader of Opposition role a huge opportunity IE

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/role-of-a-lok-sabhas-leader-of-opposition/>

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