

Parliamentary Committees in India - Silent Pillars of Democracy

August 30, 2025 • vajiramandravi.com



Parliament Committees in India Latest News

- Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, recently addressed the National Conference of Chairpersons of Parliamentary and Legislature Committees on Welfare of SCs and STs.
- He highlighted the increasing importance of parliamentary committees in India in ensuring accountability.
- He also highlighted the **declining quality of dialogue, decorum, and discussion in legislatures**.

Historical Evolution and Structure of Parliament Committees in India

- **Historical evolution:** Even though a structured committee system was only established in **1993**, individual committees were being formed for various reasons as far back as independence. **For instance**, the Ad Hoc Committee on the Citizenship Clause.
- **Structure:**
 - **Standing committees:** Permanent, subject-specific (finance, defence, etc.).

- **Ad Hoc committees:** Temporary, for specific purposes.
- **Joint committees:** Drawn from both Houses for common issues. **For example**, the JPC to evaluate the feasibility of implementing the '**One Nation, One Election**' initiative.
- **Specialised committees:** e.g., Business Advisory Committee, Committee on Papers Laid on the Table.

Need for Parliament Committees

- **Volume of work:** The Parliament cannot deliberate on all issues on the floor due to time and procedural constraints.
- **Beyond legislation:** Committees handle sector-specific concerns, welfare oversight, financial scrutiny, and executive accountability.
- **Behind-the-scenes contribution:** Every Bill, debate, and parliamentary procedure is supported by committee work, often invisible to the public eye.

Role of Parliament and Legislature Committees

- **Accountability and transparency:** Committees scrutinize government functioning, schemes, and expenditure.
- **Bipartisan nature and consensus building:** Panels function above party lines, making them crucial for effective governance.
- **Oversight on spending:** Demand for Grants reports highlight expenditure gaps (e.g., Panchayati Raj Ministry's under-utilisation of funds in 2022-23).
- **Impactful interventions:** Empowered to recommend improvements in implementation of schemes for SCs and STs, ensure budget allocations reach intended beneficiaries.

Significant Contributions of Parliament Committees in India

- **Digital Data Protection Bill:** From Justice Srikrishna Committee (2017) → Joint Parliamentary Committee (2021) → Draft Digital Personal Data Protection Bill (2022).
- **Major legislations referred:**
 - Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill.
 - Anti-Maritime Piracy Bill.
 - Jan Vishwas Bill.
 - Wildlife Protection (Amendment) Bill.
 - Competition (Amendment) Bill, Electricity Bill, Criminal Procedure (Identification) Bill.
- **Public Accounts Committee (2015):** Flagged inefficiencies in defence shipyards — cost overruns, delays, inadequate practices.

Concerns Raised About Parliament and Legislature Committees

- **Decline in deliberation:** Reduced debates and disruptions in both Lok Sabha and state assemblies.

- **For example**, only 60% bills referred to these committees in the 14th Lok Sabha, 15th Lok Sabha (71%), 16th Lok Sabha (25%), and 17th Lok Sabha (16%), highlighting their **declining role in legislative/ expert scrutiny**.
- **Language and conduct**: Falling standards of parliamentary behaviour. **Example**: recent Monsoon Session of Parliament marred by daily disruptions over electoral roll revision in Bihar.
- **Political polarisation**: Committees could lose their influence.
- **Lack of binding power**: Recommendations often ignored.

The Road Ahead

- **Compulsory referral of Bills**: As in the U.S., every Bill should be scrutinised by relevant committees before passing.
- **Strengthening powers**: To avoid becoming “toothless tigers,” committees need more authority to enforce accountability.
- **Institutionalisation**: Formalise processes to prevent political expediency from bypassing scrutiny.
- **Preserve consensus mechanism**: Committees must remain bipartisan spaces of constructive deliberation.

Conclusion

- Strengthening the committee system is essential to **revive deliberative democracy in India**, as it provides a bipartisan space for scrutiny, accountability, and consensus-building.
- Empowering parliamentary committees in India with greater authority can ensure more **informed, inclusive, and transparent law-making** in the years ahead.

Source: **IE** | **TH**

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/parliamentary-committees-in-india-silent-pillars-of-democracy/>

© Vajiram & Ravi. For personal use only.