

## Parliamentary committees in India

The **Parliament** must perform complex and varied kind of functions.

A **committee** can be called a **Parliamentary committee** if it is appointed or elected by the house or nominated by the Speaker or the Chairman; it has a secretariat provided by the Lok Sabha/Rajya Sabha secretariat.

### **Why need Parliamentary Committee?**

- Parliament scrutinizes legislative proposals (Bills) in two ways. The first is by discussing it on the floor of the two Houses.
- This is a legislative requirement; all Bills must be taken up for debate.
- The time spent debating the bills can vary. They can be passed in a matter of minutes, or debate and voting on them can run late into the night.
- Since Parliament meets for 70 to 80 days in a year, there is not enough time to discuss every Bill in detail on the floor of the House.

### ▪ Standing committee

**Standing Committees** are **permanent** and regular committees which are constituted from time to time in pursuance of the provisions of an Act of Parliament or Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha. The work of these Committees is of continuous nature. It is formed every year.

Standing committees are of the following kinds:

1. Financial standing committees (FSC)
2. Department related standing committees (DRSC)
3. Other standing committees (OSC)

### 1) Financial standing committees

The financial committees play an important role in the system of Parliamentary control over finances. These committees ensure that the objective of Parliamentary control over finances are fulfilled. The Parliament as a general body is too big to exercise any specific control over public expenditure. It is, therefore, left to the committees to act as the 'trustees' of the Parliament in keeping a strict watch over the public purse.

There are three important standing committees dealing with financial affairs. These committees involve further sub-committees.

- I. **Public Accounts Committee** – It examines various expenditure reports and accounts under the purview of the Parliament. Till 1966-67, a senior member of the ruling party used to be appointed by the Speaker as Chairman of the Committee. In 1967, however, for the first time, a member from the Opposition in Lok Sabha, was appointed as the chairperson of the committee by the Speaker of the Lok Sabha. This practice continues till date.

It serves as a check on the government especially with respect to its expenditure bill and its primary function is to examine the audit report of Comptroller and Auditor General (C&AG) after it is laid in the Parliament. C&AG assists the committee during investigation. None of its members can be ministers in the government. The main function of the committee is to ascertain whether the money granted by parliament has been spent by government within the scope of the demand.

The Public Accounts Committee consists of not more than twenty-two members, fifteen elected by Lok Sabha, the lower house of the Parliament, and not more than seven members of Rajya Sabha, the upper house of the Parliament. The members are elected every year from amongst its members of respective houses according to the principle of proportional representation by means of single transferable vote. The chairperson is appointed by the Lok Sabha speaker. The term of office of the members is one year.

At present, the 16th Lok Sabha has no designated leader of opposition,[1] however the Indian National Congress (INC) being largest opposition party has gotten the responsibility of heading the PAC. The current PAC is headed by Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury since July 2019 after Mallikarjun Kharge, who was leader of INC in the Lok Sabha. He was re-appointed to a second term in May 2018.

- II. **Estimates Committee** – The committee on Estimates, constituted for the first time in 1950, is a committee consisting of 30 members, elected every year by the Lok Sabha from amongst its Members, according to the principle of proportional representation by means of single transferable vote. The chairperson is appointed by the Lok Sabha speaker. The term of office of the members is one year. A minister is not eligible to become a member of the committee. In case a member after his election to the committee becomes a minister, he or she ceases to be a member from the date of such appointment. There are no members from Rajya Sabha.

**Currently the committee is headed by Girish Bapat from the Bhartiya Janata Party.**

- III. **Public Undertakings Committee** – It analyses the accounts, and workings of the state owned PSU firms. It also keeps a check on the disinvestment policies of the various PSUs. The committee consists of twenty-two members, fifteen elected by Lok Sabha, the lower house of the Parliament, and not more than seven members of Rajya Sabha, the upper house of the Parliament. The members are elected every year from amongst its members of respective houses according to the principle of proportional representation by means of single transferable vote. The chairperson is appointed by the Lok Sabha speaker. The term of office of the members is one year. A minister is not eligible to become a member of the committee. If a member after his election to the committee becomes a Minister, he ceases to be a member from the date of such appointment.

Finance Committees Details for the 16<sup>th</sup> Lok Sabha (2014 – 2019) ; Updated as of August 2018 <sup>[2][3][4][5]</sup>

S.No. ↕	Committee ↕	Chairperson ↕	Composition ↕	Tenure ↕	Nominated / elected ↕	Sub-committees ↕
1	Public Accounts Committee	MP Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury	22 members (15 LS + 7 RS)	1 Year	Elected from Lok Sabha & Rajya Sabha MPs	<b>Sub-Committee – I</b> : Non Compliance in Timely submission of Action Taken Notes on the Non-selected Audit Paragraphs & Excess Expenditure <b>Sub-Committee – II</b> : Direct and Indirect Taxes <b>Sub-Committee – III</b> : Implementation of Recommendations of PAC <b>Sub-Committee – IV</b> : Railways
2	Estimates Committee	MP Girish Bapat	30 members (LS)	1 Year	Elected from Lok Sabha MPs	<b>Sub-Committee – I</b> : Drought situation in the country pertaining to the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare <b>Sub-Committee – II</b> : Education with special reference to the recent development regarding autonomy in Education
3	Public Undertakings Committee	MP Meenakshi Lekhi	22 members (15 LS + 7 RS)	1 Year	Elected from Lok Sabha & Rajya Sabha MPs	*Currently None*

## ▪ DEPARTMENT RELATED STANDING COMMITTEES

1) There shall be Parliamentary Standing Committees of the Houses (to be called the Standing Committees) related to Ministries/Departments.

(2) Each of the Standing Committees shall be related to the Ministries/Departments as specified in the Third Schedule:

(3) Provided that the Chairman and the Speaker, Lok Sabha (hereinafter referred to as the Speaker), may alter the said Schedule from time to time in consultation with each other.

## Functions

Each of the Standing Committees shall have the following functions, namely: -

- a. 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 motions.
- b. to examine Bills, pertaining to the related Ministries/Departments, referred to the Committee by the Chairman or the Speaker and report thereon.
- c. to consider the annual reports of the Ministries/Departments and report thereon; and
- d. to consider national basic long-term policy documents presented to the Houses, if referred to the Committee by the Chairman or the Speaker and report thereon:

Provided that the Standing Committees shall not consider matters of day-to-day administration of the related Ministries/Departments.

## Limitations

- They shouldn't consider the matters of day to day administration of concerned ministries.
- They shouldn't consider the matters which are considered by other parliamentary committees.
- It should be noted that the recommendation of these committees is advisory in nature and not binding on the parliament.

\*\* the following procedure shall be followed by each of the standing committees in examining the bills and making the report.

- The committee shall consider the general principles and clauses of bills referred to it.
- The committee shall make report on bills in given time.

### **Department-related Standing Committees Details**

- 1 Committee on commerce
- 2 Committee on home affairs
- 3 Committee on human resource development
- 4 Committee on industry
- 5 Committee on science and technology, environment, and forest
- 6 Committee on transport, tourism, and culture
- 7 Committee on health and family welfare
- 8 Committee on personal, public grievances and law and justice
- 9 Committee on agriculture
- 10 Committee on information technology
- 11 Committee on defence
- 12 Committee on energy
- 13 Committee on external affairs
- 14 Committee on finance
- 15 Committee on food, consumer affairs and public distribution
- 16 Committee on labour
- 17 Committee on petroleum and natural gas
- 18 Committee on railways
- 19 Committee on urban development
- 20 Committee on water resources, chemicals, and fertilisers
- 21 Committee on rural development
- 22 Committee on coal and steel
- 23 Committee on social justice and empowerment