

Part 3

Key People in Parliament

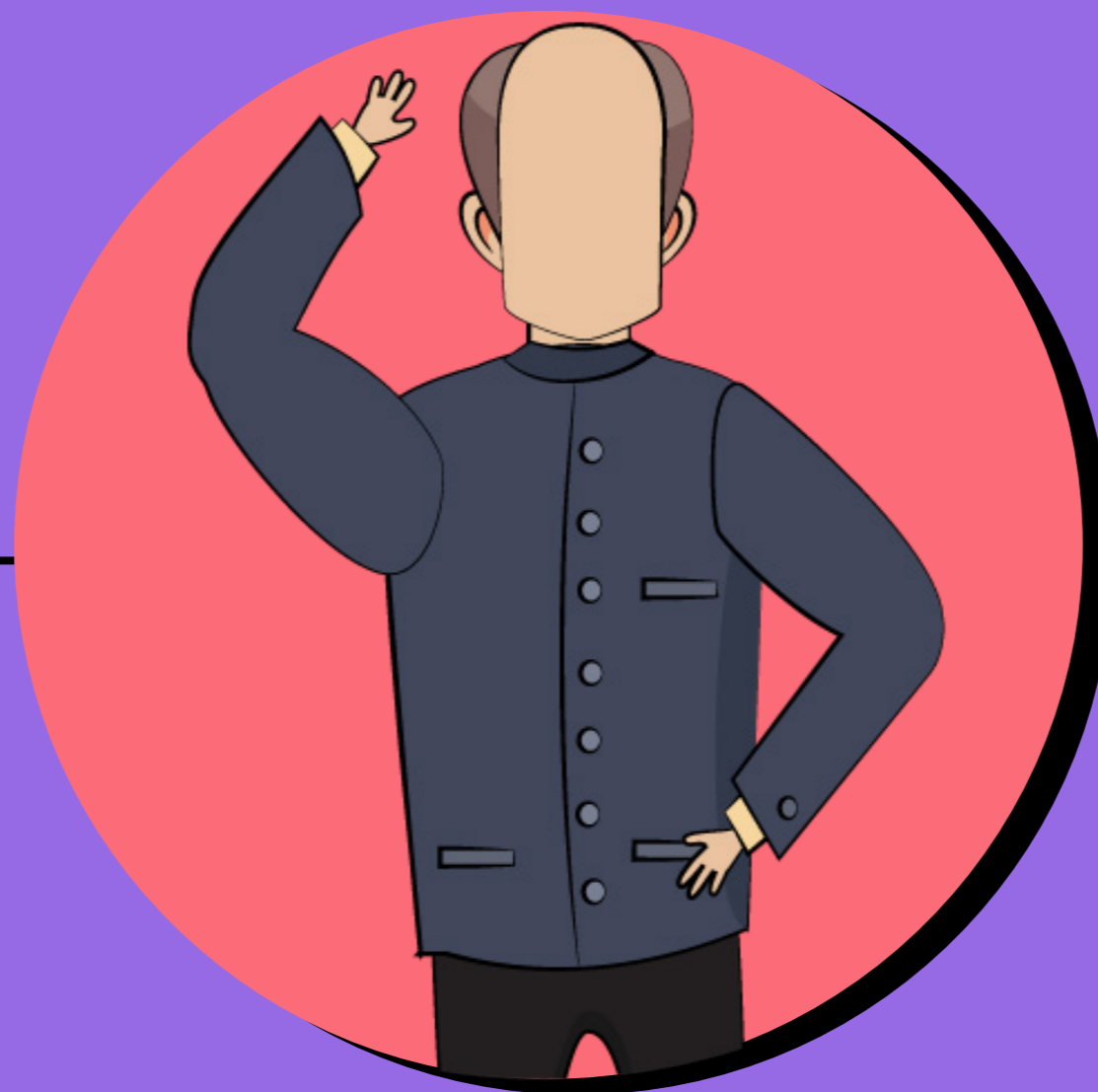


Part 3: Key People in Parliament

Functions of the President

Giving assent to bills so that they can become laws

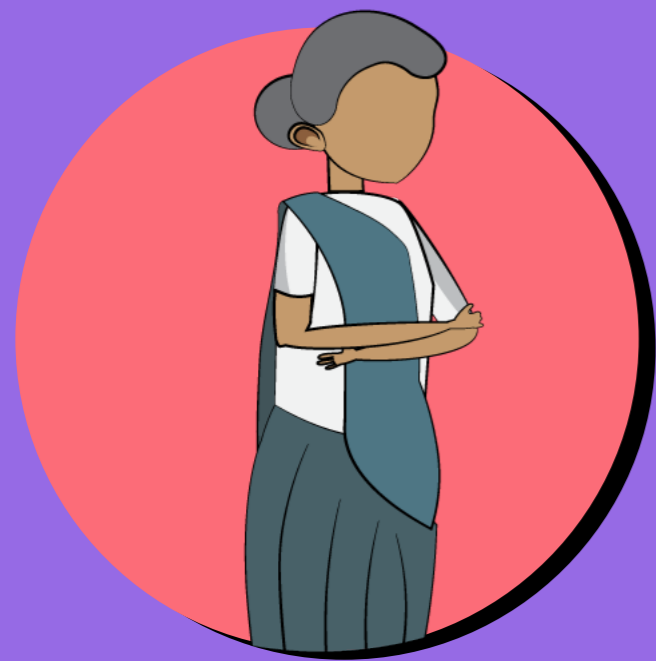
Issuing Ordinances when Parliament is not in session



Summoning and proroguing sessions and dissolving the Lok Sabha

Presiding Officers of Parliament

Lok Sabha



Lok Sabha
Speaker

- Presiding Officer
- All MPs of the Lok Sabha elect the Speaker from amongst them
- Remains in this office until the Lok Sabha is dissolved
- Usually from the ruling party or from a party that is allied with the ruling party

- Elected from amongst the Lok Sabha by all its members
- Acts as Speaker as and when the office of the Speaker falls vacant
- When the Speaker is presiding, the Deputy Speaker functions only as a regular MP



Deputy Lok Sabha
Speaker

The office of Speaker can fall vacant under certain circumstances i.e If s/he is no longer an MP, if s/he resigns, or through a resolution for removal by a majority of members of the Lok Sabha.

Panel of Chairpersons of the Lok Sabha



- Nominated by the Speaker
- Panel of a maximum of 10 MPs
- Fill in for Speaker and Deputy Speaker when they are absent

Primary Powers and Functions of the Speaker

Maintaining order and decorum in the House and regulating its proceedings

Being the final interpreter of the provisions of the Constitution, the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business of Lok Sabha, and the parliamentary precedents, within the House

Presiding over a joint sitting of the two Houses of Parliament

Deciding whether a bill is a money bill or not



Chairman of the Rajya Sabha

- Vice President of India is the ex-officio Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, as per the Constitution.
- Unlike the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, the Chairman is not an MP.



Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha

- Deputy Chairman is elected by MPs of the Rajya Sabha from amongst themselves.
- The office of Deputy Chairman can fall vacant under certain circumstances; for example when he/she resigns.

While the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha has similar powers as the Speaker on the whole, in certain cases s/he has lesser powers than the Speaker. For instance, s/he does not decide whether a bill is a money bill and does not preside over a Joint Sitting of both Houses.

Panel of Vice-Chairpersons of Rajya Sabha



- Chairman nominates a panel of a maximum of 6 MPs.
- They perform the function of filling in for the Chairman and the Deputy Chairman when they are not present.

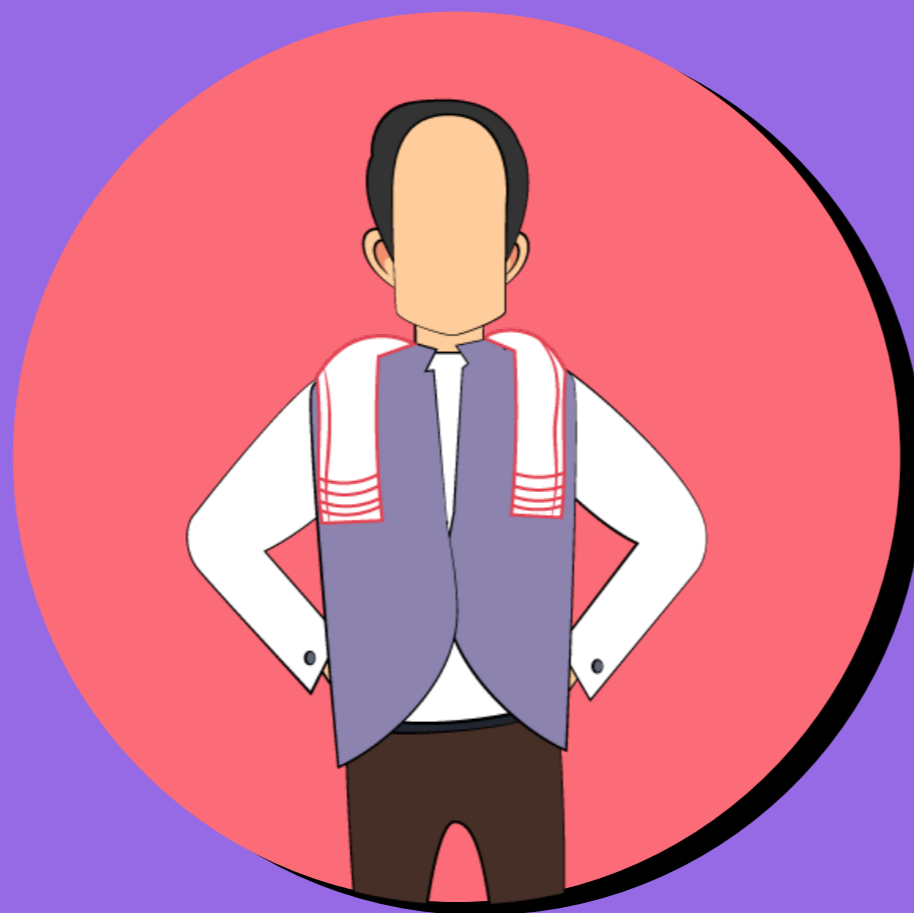
Key Figures in Both Houses



Treasury Bench

- Treasury Bench is derived from the British (Westminster) parliamentary model.
- It refers to the first row of seats to the right of the Speaker/Chairperson.
- It is also sometimes used to refer to Ministers from the ruling party and at times, all MPs from the ruling party.

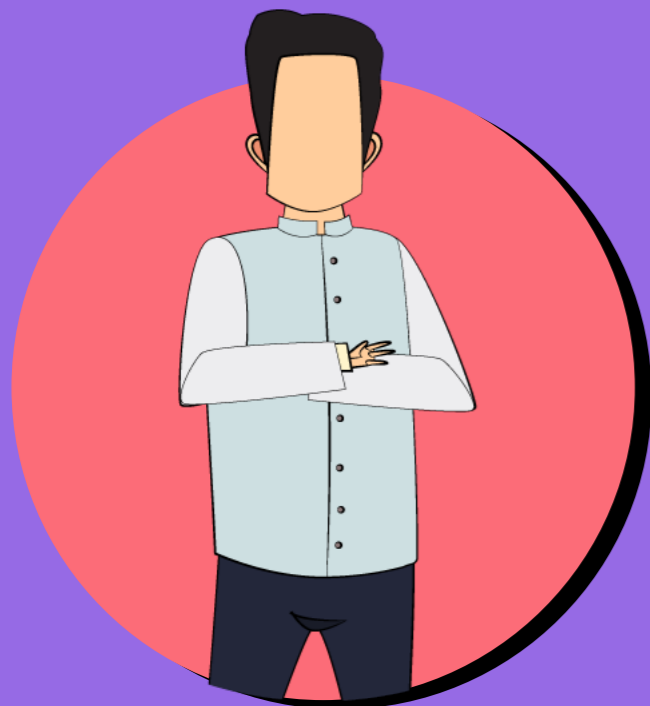
Leader of the House



- S/he is the nodal representative of the ruling party in either House.
- Prime Minister is the Leader of that House of which s/he is a member. In the other House, a Union Cabinet Minister is nominated as the Leader of the House.

- Along with the Chief Whip and the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs s/he is responsible for steering government business in Parliament.
- The office of the Leader of the House is not mentioned in the Constitution of India. However, it is mentioned in the rules of both Houses.

Prime Minister



- The real (de facto) head of the executive branch of the government
- Enjoys support of the majority of the Lok Sabha
- The Leader of that House to which s/he belongs

Council of Ministers

- Executive branch of government in Parliament
- Headed by the Prime Minister
- Collectively responsible to the Lok Sabha and derives its legitimacy by enjoying support of a majority of the Lok Sabha
- Cannot exceed, in strength, 15% of the total membership of the Lok Sabha or 81 Ministers



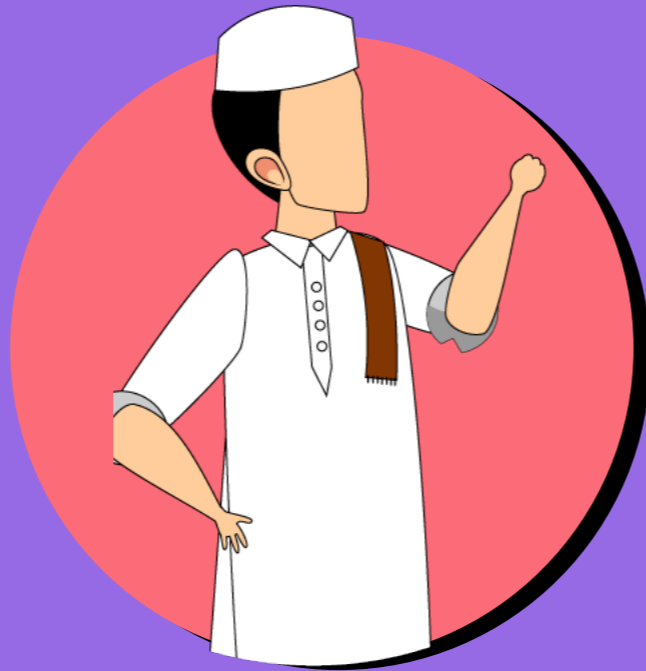
Minister of Parliamentary Affairs



- At times de facto chief whip of their party
- Responsible for all matters related to functioning of the parliament
- Advises the government about its parliamentary agenda and strategy
- Point of contact between the government and the leader of opposition

OPPOSITION BENCH

- Term comes from British (Westminster) parliamentary tradition
- Broadly used to refer to Opposition MPs as a group in either House



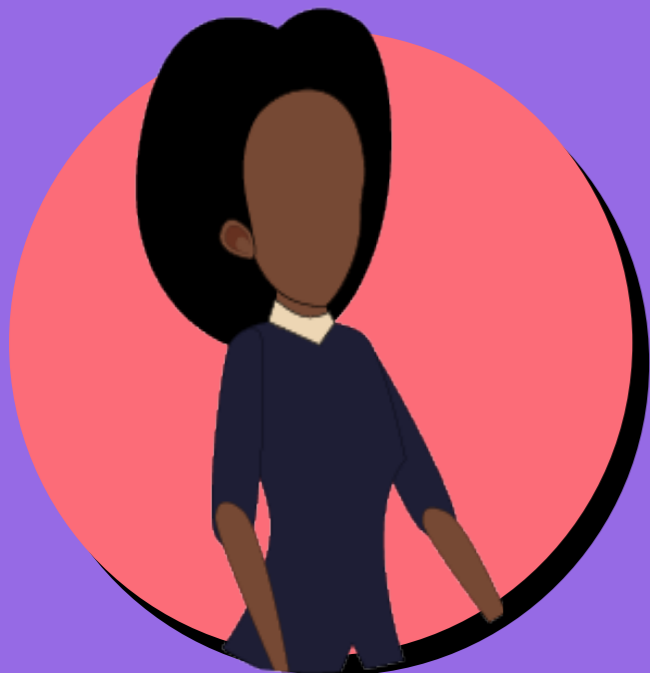
Leader of the
Opposition (LoP)

As per the Salaries and Allowances of Leaders of Opposition in Parliament Act, 1977 they are the chosen representative of the numerically biggest party in opposition to the government.

Through parliamentary convention, an additional proviso has been attached to the position, that the party must have won 10% of the seats of that house i.e. 55 in the Lok Sabha and 25 in the Rajya Sabha.

Crucial post in a parliamentary democracy, as the LoP leads the Opposition in both Houses to hold the government accountable

Also performs crucial functions such as being part of the selection committees for key appointments like the Lokpal, the CBI Director, Chief Vigilance Commissioner etc.



Secretary General

- Each House has a Secretary General
- Serves as the administrative head, supervises each House's Secretariat
- Advises Presiding Officers on parliamentary procedures and precedent
- Appointed by the Speaker and Chairman and is drawn from civil services, or central or state legislatures' secretarial services
- Not a political post
- Treated as equivalent to the rank of the Cabinet Secretary to the Government of India



Media

- An important observer to parliamentary proceedings
- Special access passes are granted to accredited members of the press
- Each Secretariat also runs a dedicated channel to air parliamentary proceedings of each house live



Citizens

- India's parliamentary democracy is structured as an indirect democracy. Thus, India being an indirect democracy, the scope for direct citizen engagement in Parliament is fairly limited.
- Citizens' interests are meant to be represented through their elected representatives i.e. MPs.
- One avenue for citizens' participation is the Petitions on Bills through which citizens provide views on legislative proposals.



CSOs/Experts/Industry Representatives

- As stakeholders, lobby with MPs to raise issues in Parliament
- As domain experts, asked by Parliamentary committees to provide information on matters pertaining to what is being discussed