



DAILY EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

TOPIC

**REVAMP FUNCTIONING OF
PARLIAMENT**

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Context

- The jointly introduced **Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill and the Delimitation Bill, 2026**, provide for increasing the strength of the Lok Sabha from 550 to 850 members.
 - ♦ It highlights that increasing MPs alone may **not improve representation unless Parliament's working capacity** is also strengthened.

Why Does Parliament Need Functional Reforms?

- **Rising representative burden:** As per the Election Commission's 2024 Atlas, India manages an electoral roll of 97.98 crore voters across 543 Lok Sabha constituencies, averaging roughly 18 lakh voters/constituency.
- **Unequal constituency sizes:** The constituency of Malkajgiri in Telangana has 37.8 lakh voters, whereas Lakshadweep has just 57,953, illustrating the uneven distribution of electoral representation.
- **Representation beyond numbers:** Adding extra members to the Lok Sabha will not solve the existing problem. If Parliament's operational timetable remains fixed, adding more lawmakers dilutes individual members' ability to participate in legislative business.

Issues in Parliamentary Functioning

- **Inadequate Parliamentary Working Time:** India **lacks a constitutional requirement prescribing a minimum number of annual working days** for Parliament.
- **Question Hour** enables MPs to seek information from ministers through **starred questions requiring oral answers and unstarred questions answered in writing**.
 - ♦ Under Lok Sabha rules, a **maximum of 20 starred questions and 230 unstarred questions** are listed for a sitting day, limiting the number of questions that can receive oral answers.
 - ♦ During the **17th Lok Sabha**, Question Hour functioned for only **60%** of its scheduled time.
- **Zero Hour** allows MPs to **raise urgent public matters**.
 - ♦ Without protected time for Zero Hour, increasing the membership of the House will weaken the ability of MPs to raise constituency-specific concerns.
- **Limited Legislative Scrutiny:** Through parliamentary debates, MPs examine the constitutional validity and other implications of proposed laws.
 - ♦ **Parliamentary committees** provide detailed, cross-party examination of Bills, but their effectiveness depends on adequate membership, consultation opportunities and sufficient time to examine complex legislation.
- **Reduced Scrutiny of Public Expenditure:** Throughout the 17th Lok Sabha, **35%** of bills were passed after less than an hour of debate, and roughly **80%** of the national budget was passed resorting to guillotine procedure.
 - ♦ The guillotine procedure allows the remaining Demands for Grants to be put to vote without detailed discussion once the allotted time expires.
- **Constraints on Private Members' Business:** Private Members' Business provides MPs who are not ministers with an opportunity to introduce Bills and resolutions.
 - ♦ Inadequate time for private members' initiatives reduces opportunities to discuss emerging social concerns.

Measures Needed to Strengthen Parliament

- **Minimum Annual Sitting Requirement:** **Article 85(1)** of the Constitution requires that no more than six months elapse between the last sitting of one session and the first sitting of the next, without prescribing a minimum number of annual sitting days.

- ♦ This provision should be **expanded to include a mandatory minimum working days** clause.
- ♦ **The National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (2002)**, chaired by Justice **M.N. Venkatachaliah recommended** that the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha should meet for at least **120 and 100** days, respectively, annually.
- **Protect Essential Parliamentary Business:** Parliament should establish defined minimum time allocations for **Question Hour, Zero Hour, Private Members' Business and substantive legislative debates**, subject to narrowly defined procedural exceptions.
- **Parliamentary Committees** should receive stronger research assistance and adequate time to examine Bills, consult stakeholders and scrutinise expenditure.
- **Legislative Planning:** The government should provide adequate notice of bills and accompanying explanatory documents, allowing MPs to assess their provisions before consideration in the House.
- **Increase Institutional Capacity:** Any expansion of the Lok Sabha should be accompanied by adequate seating, committee facilities, research personnel, legislative support services and technological infrastructure.

Way Ahead

- Expanding the Lok Sabha will help address the growing burden of electoral representation, but numerical expansion alone cannot guarantee meaningful democratic participation.
- True representation means that the MP has adequate time and opportunity to voice out the concerns of citizens in Parliament. Hence, parliamentary reforms are necessary to ensure that the voices within those constituencies are heard.

Source: TH

Daily Mains Practice Question

- [Q] The effectiveness of parliamentary democracy depends not merely on the number of elected representatives but also on their ability to participate meaningfully in legislative proceedings. Discuss the need for parliamentary functional reforms in the context of the proposed expansion of the Lok Sabha.