

## Monsoon Session of Parliament (2021)

The Monsoon session of the Parliament commenced on July 19, 2021 and lasted till August 13, 2021. The Monsoon session was almost entirely wiped-out and productivity remained abysmal during the session. It witnessed some of the ugliest scenes inside the Indian Parliament and ultimately had to be dissolved with a sine die order. Despite these developments some bills have been passed and it is necessary to look at the session more closely to understand what transpired inside the Parliament that led to such distrust between the opposition and the government.

## Productivity of Monsoon Session:

	<b>Monsoon Session 2020</b>	<b>Budget Session 2021</b>	<b>Monsoon Session 2021</b>
<b>Lok Sabha</b>	58.1 hrs	131.8 hrs	21.3 hrs
<b>Rajya Sabha</b>	39.5 hrs	104.4 hrs	29.0hrs

Around 89 hours of working time has been wasted, meaning a total loss of more than Rs 133 crores of taxpayer's money

## All-Party Meet:



Prime Minister Narendra Modi called an all-party meeting on the second day of the monsoon session to discuss COVID, but this was not attended by any party from the opposition. He also assured that the government is ready to hold discussions on any subject if raised as per rules and procedures during the Monsoon session of Parliament.

## Bills Passed in The Monsoon Session:

1. The Factoring Regulation (Amendment) Bill, 2020.
2. The National Institutes of Food Technology, Entrepreneurship and Management Bill, 2019.
3. The Marine Aids To Navigation Bill, 2021.
4. The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Bill, 2021.
5. The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Bill, 2021.
6. The Inland Vessels Bill, 2021.
7. The Airports Economic Regulatory Authority of India (Amendment) Bill, 2021.
8. The Coconut Development Board (Amendment) Bill, 2021.
9. The General Insurance Business (Nationalisation) Amendment Bill, 2021.
10. The Essential Defence Services Bill, 2021.
11. The Tribunals Reforms Bill, 2021.
12. The Limited Liability Partnership (Amendment) Bill, 2021.
13. The Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (Amendment) Bill, 2021.
14. The Commission for Air Quality Management in National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Bill, 2021.

15. The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2021.
16. The Central Universities (Amendment) Bill, 2021.
17. The Taxation Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2021.
18. The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-seventh Amendment) Bill, 2021.
19. The National Commission for Homoeopathy (Amendment) Bill, 2021.
20. The National Commission for Indian System of Medicine (Amendment) 2021.

We have selected some of the most important bills for the benefit of our readers:

### **The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Seventh Amendment) Bill, 2021:**

The 2021 Bill amends the earlier Act to provide that the President may notify the list of socially and educationally backward classes only for purposes of the central government. This central list will be prepared and maintained by the central government. Further, the Bill enables states and union territories to prepare their own list of socially and educationally backward classes. This list must be made by law and may differ from the central list.

### **The General Insurance Business (Nationalisation) Amendment Bill, 2021:**

The earlier Act required that the shareholding of the central government in the specified insurers must be at least 51%. The Bill removes this provision. The Bill provides that the Act will not apply to the specified insurers from the date on which the central government relinquishes control of the insurer.

### **The Central Universities (Amendment) Bill, 2021:**

The Central Universities (Amendment) Bill, 2021 amends the Central Universities Act, 2009. The 2009 Act provides for the establishment of Central Universities for teaching and research in various states. The 2021 Bill provides for the establishment of the Sindhu Central University in the union territory of Ladakh.

Almost all of the Bills passed have been passed without any debate and even the Chief Justice of India has recently remarked that it is very difficult to understand the purpose of such bills if they

are passed without debate. Parliamentary Debate is used as a supplementary source to understand the mind of the legislators by Courts while determining the scope of various Acts passed by Parliament.

## Debates:



Various debates on topics of prime importance for the nation on issues such as COVID, price rise, and national security were supposed to occur in both houses of the Parliament, but in reality, very few debates did occur and most were not concluded. Let us look at the debates in detail:

No debates were conducted in the Lok Sabha.

Rajya Sabha:

<b>Type of Debate</b>	<b>Topic of debate</b>	<b>Start Date</b>	<b>End Date</b>	<b>Total Time</b>	<b>Participants</b>	<b>Remark</b>
<b>Discussion under 176</b>	Management of COVID-19 pandemic	July 20, 2021	July 20, 2021	04:45:00	23	Discussion concluded
<b>Short Duration Discussion</b>	Agriculture problems and solutions	August 10, 2021		00:15:00		Discussion not concluded

## Pegasus:

Pegasus remained the most contentious issue between the govt. and the opposition, with the opposition making it clear to the govt that they would not let the parliament function unless a debate on Pegasus occurred and both the Prime Minister and the Home Minister would be present to answer questions directly.

The Standing Committee on Information Technology headed by Congress leader Shashi Tharoor could not deliberate on “Citizens’ Data Security and Privacy”, as none of the officials of Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MEITY), and the Department of Telecom came for the meeting, citing various reasons for their absence. They claimed that the committee cannot meet while parliament is in session.

Nishikant Dubey alleged that in the meeting of the IT committee, Mahua called him ‘Bihari gunda’ thrice. As the allegation was presented on Twitter, Moitra too responded on Twitter and said she is amused by the charge of name-calling as she said that the said meeting did not take place as there was no quorum.

The government, on its part, categorically rejected the charges, with IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw asserting in the Lok Sabha that illegal surveillance was not possible with checks and balances in the country's laws, and alleged that attempts were being made to malign Indian democracy. Several opposition members gave adjournment notices to discuss the issue but were rejected by the chair.

## COVID:

Short Duration Discussion on COVID was conducted for four hours in Rajya Sabha.

Opposition parties in Rajya Sabha slammed the government over the handling of COVID-19.

MP Sanjay Raut stated that the government should bring out real data concerning deaths due to COVID-19. “Our question to the government is why are you hiding the data? Tell us, how many people have lost their lives (due to COVID). Reports say more (deaths) than the government's official figures,” he said.

Samajwadi Party MP Ram Gopal Yadav urged the government to raise the health budget.

## Unruly Behaviour of The Parliamentarians:

The tumultuous Monsoon session of Parliament was curtailed by two days after opposition MPs jostled with marshals in the well of the house when they were trying to move towards the chair and the treasury benches.

A lady marshal was manhandled by opposition MPs. Opposition's behaviour in Rajya Sabha was a new low for the parliamentary democracy.

Opposition leader Rahul Gandhi alleged that the Government has for the first time in the history of Independent India called 'outsiders' inside the Parliament to harass the MPs. His allegation falls flat in the face of the facts as Marshals cannot by any extent of imagination be called 'outsiders' and they have a very specific duty to perform in the Parliamentary process.

## The Marshals:

For a layman, the most common sighting of Marshalls is the two tall, well-built men that flank the Lok Sabha Speaker and Rajya Sabha Chairman's chair. The man on the Speaker's left is the marshal. The other one is the deputy marshal. They are the ones who escort unruly members out of the House if the Chair orders so and prohibits anyone from reaching the Chair during a commotion.

To be appointed in the post of Marshal, at least three years of experience on the Assistant Director grade in the Security Department is required, or five years' experience as Assistant Director and Security Officer in total is required. If such a candidate is not found, then a candidate who has at least 9 years of experience in the Group 'A' post can also be selected for appointment to this post.

## Previous Instances of Marshals Being Called in Parliament:

Aug 05, 2019, Marshalls Called Inside Parliament for the First Time In 11 Years as PDP MPs tore up a copy of the Constitution.

In 2008, when an MP from Bihar broke glasses and tried to harm himself, during the passage of the Women's Reservation Bill.

## Last Day of Monsoon Session:



The Parliament witnessed ugly scenes in the recently concluded Monsoon Session where both the Opposition and the government sparred over various issues and bills that were passed in a din. The Opposition was seen protesting in the House displaying placards, shouting slogans, tearing papers and throwing them at the chair, trying to climb onto the table in front of the chair, throwing the rulebook, and using unparliamentary language.

The Rajya Sabha Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu broke down inside the Rajya Sabha, “I rise in deep anguish to place on record the way this august House is being subjected to sacrilege and that too propelled by a sense of competition among some sections of the House since the commencement of this Monsoon Session.” He further said, “I have no words to convey my anguish and to condemn such acts. As I spent a sleepless night last night, I struggled to find the provocation or reason for forcing this august House to hit such a low yesterday.”

While the words of the Rajya Sabha Chairman are thought-provoking the opposition seemed to have adopted a blasé attitude about the wash out of the Monsoon session. The opposition spokespersons have quoted the words of Late Arun Jaitley, “There are occasions when an obstruction in Parliament brings greater benefits to the country... Our strategy does not permit us to allow the government to use Parliament (for debate) without being held accountable... we do not want to give the government an escape route through debate.” The opposition sees this opportunity to give the BJP a taste of its own medicine.

The fight between the opposition and govt. is not new in India but the level of distrust between the two has reached alarming levels. While there is truth in the opposition's words when they harken BJP's own unruly behaviour in the past, the ultimate losers in this fight are the ordinary voters who look at the leaders to lead the nation and expect the MPs to discuss issues of national importance in the parliament. After all, it is not only the duty of the govt. to run the parliament but also the oppositions.

- Arpit (Chief Editor) & Shivashish Narayan (Asst. Editor)

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