

WINTER SESSION 2021

The Winter Session of Parliament was scheduled between November 29, 2021 to December 23, 2021. There had to be a total of 19 sittings but the Parliament was adjourned one day ahead of schedule, having sat for 18 days only. The Winter session of Parliament saw frequent disruptions over the suspension of 12 members of Rajya Sabha, demanding the resignation of the Minister over the Lakhimpur Kheri incident and later over the Election Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2021.

PRODUCTIVITY OF WINTER SESSION

| | 2021 | 2020 | 2019 | 2018 |
|------------------------|------|------|------|------|
| LOK SABHA | 77% | NA | 111% | 46% |
| RAJYA SABHA | 43% | NA | 92% | 26% |

Lok Sabha worked for 77% of its scheduled time, while Rajya Sabha worked for 43%. On November 29, 2021, Lok Sabha sat for over 12 hours which included a discussion on COVID-19. Rajya Sabha's longest sitting was for over five hours; this was less than the daily schedule of six hours. Lok Sabha lost up to 18 hours 48 minutes to disruptions and worked for 83 hours and 12 minutes through the 18 sittings this session. The Rajya Sabha, on the other hand, conducted business for 45 hours 34 minutes out of a scheduled sitting time of 95 hours 6 minutes and its longest sitting was for over five hours which was an hour less than the daily scheduled time. More than 19 hours in Lok Sabha and one hour in Rajya Sabha were spent on non-legislative debates during this session.

BEFORE SESSION STARTED



- Ahead of Parliament's Winter Session, the Narendra Modi-led central government had called an all-party meeting, chaired by the Prime Minister to discuss the agenda for the session and other important businesses. Meanwhile, the Opposition, too, was adamant to

discuss the bill in the House to corner the government over the farm issues. The Congress had issued three-line whips in both the Houses, asking party MPs to be present.

- Trinamool Congress and Aam Aadmi Party skipped the Opposition meeting called by the Congress Party ahead of the Winter Session. The meeting called by the leader of the Opposition, Mallikarjun Kharge in Rajya Sabha was attended by 11 parties.

BILLS TAKEN UP DURING WINTER SESSION

Passed By Both Houses

1. Election Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2021.
2. The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (Amendment) Bill, 2021.
3. The Delhi Special Police Establishment Amendment Bill, 2021.
4. The Central Vigilance Commission Amendment Bill, 2021.
5. The High Court and Supreme Court Judges (Salaries and Conditions of Service) Amendment Bill, 2021.
6. Farm Laws Repeal Bill, 2021.
7. Assisted Reproductive Technology Regulation Bill, 2020.
8. The Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2019.
9. Dam Safety Bill, 2019.
10. The National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research (Amendment) Bill, 2021.

Before Parliamentary Standing Committee

1. The Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021.
2. The Mediation Bill, 2021.
3. The Chartered Accountants, Cost and works accountants and Company secretaries (Amendment) Bill, 2021.
4. The Biological Diversity (Amendment) Bill, 2021.

Introduced In Lok Sabha

1. The Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Bill, 2021.
2. The National Anti-Doping Bill, 2021.

BRIEF DETAILS OF SOME BILLS:

1. The Farm Laws Repeal Bill, 2021: The Bill repeals the three farm laws passed by Parliament in September 2020. These were: (i) the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020, (ii) the Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020, and (iii) the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020.
2. The Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2019: The Bill defines surrogacy as a practice where a woman gives birth to a child for an intending couple with the intention to hand over the child after the birth to the intending couple. The Bill prohibits commercial surrogacy, but allows altruistic surrogacy also the intending couple should have a 'certificate of essentiality' and a 'certificate of eligibility' issued by the appropriate authority. The central and the state governments shall constitute the National Surrogacy Board (NSB) and the State Surrogacy Boards (SSB), respectively. Functions of the NSB include, (i) advising the central government on policy matters relating to surrogacy; (ii) laying down the code of conduct of surrogacy clinics; and (iii) supervising the functioning of SSBs.
3. The Election Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2021: The Bill amends the Representation of the People Act, 1950 and the Representation of the People Act, 1951 to implement certain electoral reforms. The Bill adds that the electoral registration officer may

require a person to furnish their Aadhaar number for establishing their identity. If their name is already in the electoral roll, then the Aadhaar number may be required for authentication of entries in the roll. People will not be denied inclusion in the electoral roll or have their names deleted from the roll, if they are unable to furnish Aadhaar number due to sufficient cause as prescribed. Such people may be permitted to furnish alternate documents prescribed by the central government. The Bill replaces the term ‘wife’ with ‘spouse’ in both the Acts.

4. The Prohibition of Child Marriage (Amendment) Bill, 2021: The Bill amends the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 to increase the minimum age of marriage of females. The Bill increases the minimum age in case of females to 21 years. The Bill also amends certain other laws relating to marriage to increase the minimum age of marriage of females under those laws to 21 years. The Bill adds that the provisions of the Act shall have an overriding effect over any other law, custom, usage or practice governing the parties to the marriage.

DEBATE:

Lok Sabha

| Type Of Debate | Topic of debate | Start Date | End Date | Total time | Participants | Remark |
|---------------------------|--|-------------------|-------------------|------------|--------------|----------------------|
| Discussion Under Rule 193 | COVID-19 pandemic and various aspects related to it. | December 02, 2021 | December 03, 2021 | 12:30:00 | 97 | Discussion concluded |

| Type Of Debate | Topic of debate | Start Date | End Date | Total time | Partici pants | Remark |
|---------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|----------|------------|---------------|----------------------------|
| Discussion Under Rule 193 | Climate change | December 08, 2021 | | 06:30:00 | 60 | Discussio n not conclude d |

Rajya Sabha

| Type Of Debate | Topic of debate | Start Date | End Date | Total time | Participants | Remark |
|---------------------------|--|-------------------|-------------------|------------|--------------|------------------|
| Short Duration Discussion | Omicron variant of COVID-19 virus in the country | December 15, 2021 | December 20, 2021 | 01:15:00 | 5 | Minister replied |

COVID- 19

The third day of December during the Winter Session of the Parliament witnessed a rare scene. The daily routine of disruptions and adjournments gave way to a whopping 204 percent productivity in Lok Sabha as 96 members of the Lower House debated COVID-19 for over 11 hours till midnight to record a milestone. Union health minister Mansukh Mandaviya pointed out in the Parliament on the floor of the House during the debate, so far, 3.46 crore coronavirus cases in India have resulted in 4.6 lakh deaths. This translates to 1.36 percent of total cases. So, 25,000 cases and 340 deaths per million population puts India's mortality rate among the lowest in the world.

REGIONAL FLAVOUR TO DEBATES IN PARLIAMENT

Bisoyi was not the only one to bring a regional flavour in Parliament. Two other speakers, Dhanush Kumar, and S Gnanathiraviam, both from Tamil Nadu, spoke in Tamil and although DMK's K Kanimozhi spoke in English, she cautioned others that she might speak in Tamil every day in the House after she stumbled while pronouncing Atmanirbhar Bharat. When some members from the Treasury bench tried to correct her, she laughed and quipped, *"See, this is the problem. You don't understand we speak a different language. I'll talk in Tamil henceforth, let me know if you can understand."* In the Rajya Sabha, where proceedings were mostly drowned by disruptions, a Tamil Nadu MP KRN Rajesh Kumar, made the first regional language speech in the winter session.

In January 2021, an official review showed that use of regional languages in the proceedings of Rajya Sabha has increased manifold in 2018-2020. While Hindi remained the most popular language for lawmakers, Telugu, Urdu, Tamil and Sanskrit were ranked second, third, fourth, and fifth respectively. Article 120 of the Constitution says, "business in Parliament shall be transacted in Hindi or in English: Provided that the Chairman of the Council of States or Speaker of the House of the People, or Person acting as such, as the Case may be, may permit any member who cannot adequately express himself in Hindi or in English to address the House in his mother tongue."

12 RAJYA SABHA PARLIAMENTARIENS SUSPENDED FOR PROTESTS IN MONSOON SESSION

Twelve Opposition members of the Rajya Sabha were suspended for the entire winter session



for "unprecedented acts of misconduct", "unruly and violent behaviour" and "intentional attacks on security personnel" on August 11, the last day of the previous monsoon session. Following the decision, the Opposition was mulling several options

including boycotting the entire winter session of Parliament. This is the first time members of

Rajya Sabha have been suspended for misconduct during the previous session. Opposition parties described the move as “authoritarian”, “unwarranted” and “undemocratic”.

END OF WINTER SESSION

Winter session ended as both houses adjourned sine die ahead of schedule. The Rajya Sabha was marred by protests and repeated adjournments throughout the Winter Session. Chairman M Venkaiah Naidu on Wednesday expressed dismay and urged the Elders to introspect. Later, he adjourned the House sine die. Before adjourning the House, Naidu said, “The Winter Session of the August House concludes today. I am not happy to share with you that the House functioned much below its potential. I urged all of you to collectively and individually reflect and introspect if this Session could have been different and better.” He also said, “I don’t want to speak elaborately on the course of this Session as it would lead me to take a very critical view. Statistics regarding various aspects of functioning of the House during this Session will be released to media for wider dissemination.”

Ten Bills were passed by the Rajya Sabha during the Winter Session while the discussion on the Appropriation Bill scheduled to be concluded on the last day was not taken up. A total time of 21 hours 07 minutes was spent on discussing the Government Bills, including the Appropriation Bill, accounting for 46.50% of the functional time of the House. 127 interventions were made by the Members in these debates.

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

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