



DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES OF THE MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

A Member of Parliament (MP) holds a very important position in a parliamentary democracy like India. With 543 MPs in the Lok Sabha (Lower House) representing more than 1.2 billion people, a Lok Sabha MP on an average represents more than 2.2 million people. A Rajya Sabha (Upper House) MP is the voice of his State in Parliament, and as such, has a very important role in our federal political system. This paper briefly describes the legislative, deliberative and developmental roles and responsibilities of an Indian MP. It also highlights provisions to make MPs accountable to the people, wherever such provisions exist.

Key words: Role, Functions, Duties, Responsibilities, Fund Allotments, Constituency Development.

Introduction

A. Legislative role of an MP

The primary role of an MP is as a legislator. According to Article 111 of the Constitution of India, any Bill becomes an Act only if passed by both houses of Parliament and assented to by the President. In case of ordinary bills, a simple majority (more than 50%) of the members (MPs) present in the house need to vote in favour of the Bill for it to be deemed passed by that House (Article 100). In case of a Constitutional Amendment Bill under Article 368, a special majority of the MPs (at least two-thirds of the MPs present and 50% of the strength of the House) needs to vote in favour for it to be passed. Additionally, when a Bill is introduced in either House of Parliament, the MPs are supposed to debate on various provisions of the Bill, and propose amendments if they so wish.

B. Deliberative role of an MP

In the Indian constitutional scheme, the Executive (government) is accountable to the legislature. This principle of accountability is realized partly by elected representatives (MPs) asking questions to government ministers, including the Prime Minister, in Parliament. The rules of procedure in each House of Parliament have provisions for a Question Hour and a Zero Hour during which written and oral questions can be asked by MPs. These could include questions specific to the State or the constituency which (s)he represents.

Finally, the Parliament also has several Standing Committees, whose members are nominated by the Chairpersons of their respective Houses. These Committees scrutinize the policies, programmes and Bills related to their ministries, and propose recommendations and amendments to the same. There are also certain other Committees such as the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) and Committee on Public Undertakings which scrutinize reports submitted by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG). All of these Committees are regulated by the Rules of Procedure in each House.

Through such questions and debates, an MP can be an active voice of his constituents or his State in Parliament.

Accountability

The Constitution of India has some provisions to make Members of Parliament accountable to their constituents.

Article 102 states that an MP can be disqualified if he holds an "office of profit" under the Government of India or the Government of any State. He can also be disqualified if he quits his party or defects to another party after being elected as an MP under the Tenth Schedule to the Indian Constitution. Further, under Article 101, if an MP is absent from the meetings of his House for more than 60 days without permission, his seat may be declared vacant. Finally, under Article 104, if an MP sits or votes in Parliament without taking oath, he shall be liable to pay a fine of up to Rs 500 per day.

Though such provisions exist, there is no provision either in the Constitution or in the Rules of Procedure to measure the performance of MPs. Thus, there is no provision for a minimum number of hours that an MP must spend in Parliament MP, or on a minimum number of questions asked by an MP.

C. Developmental role of an MP

Apart from his role in Parliament, an MP also has an important developmental role in his/her State or constituency. The MP can fulfill this role with the aid of the following provisions:

MPLADS – Under the Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS), launched in 1993, every MP is allocated Rs 5 crore per year for initiating developmental works in his constituency. The scheme is administered by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), which lays down guidelines on the works and activities permitted under MPLADS. The funds under MPLADS are channeled through the respective implementing agencies in the district. Details on the scheme and permissible works under it are mentioned later in this document.

Representation in local bodies – Local bodies such as Panchayats and municipalities have an important role to play in bringing development to the grassroots. Part IXA of the Constitution has a provision under which the Legislature of a State may provide for the representation of an MP at the intermediate and District level Panchayats (Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad). Similarly, under Part IXA of the Constitution, the State legislature may provide for the representation of MPs in municipal bodies within the constituency. MPs may also be nominated to District Planning Committees (DPCs) which are constitutional bodies responsible for preparing development plans for the district. For example, in Maharashtra, the State government nominates MPs and MLAs to the DPC.

Vigilance and monitoring of government schemes – MPs have also been assigned an important role in the monitoring of some Centrally Sponsored Schemes in their respective districts. The National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP) mandates the setting up of District Water and Sanitation Missions (DWSMs) of which all MPs and MLAs from the area would be members. The DWSM is, among other things, responsible for formulation, management and monitoring of projects on drinking water security, scrutiny and approval of the schemes submitted by the Block Panchayat/ Gram Panchayat and coordination of matters relating to water and sanitation between different departments. Similarly, under the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), MPs are expected to be members of the District Level Vigilance and Monitoring Committees (DVMCs) to review the progress in implementation of the scheme.

Apart from the above, MPs could also work towards catalyzing schemes of the State and Central government in their constituencies. This is possible by proactive engagement with public officials at the Central and State levels, greater interaction with constituents to understand their needs and concerns, and greater information – both qualitative and quantitative – about their constituencies. As elected representatives, they also have legitimate political authority to engage directly with the private/corporate sector for industrial development of their constituencies. Many MPs have done so successfully in the past, and many others continue to do so today.

MPLAD Scheme

MPLAD Scheme was launched in 1993 and is currently administered by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. It provides funds to Parliamentarians for implementing development works in their respective constituencies.

Features

Annual MPLAD fund entitlement is Rs 5 crore.

Lok Sabha members can recommend works within their constituencies and Rajya Sabha members can recommend works within their states. Nominated members of both Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha can recommend works anywhere in the country.

District Magistrate/Collector would be responsible for sanctioning projects under the scheme, along with approval and disbursement of MPLAD funds.

15% of the annual entitlement under MPLAD must be used in areas inhabited by SCs and 7.5% in areas inhabited by ST population. ST areas are notified by Government of India. Areas having SC population greater than average for the district could be considered SC areas by District Magistrates/District Collectors for the purpose of MPLADs works.

If a constituency does not have ST inhabited area, funds can be used in an SC area. District Magistrate/Collector has been entrusted with the responsibility of enforcing the provision of the guidelines.

Permissible items under the scheme

1. Social Welfare

Purchase of tricycles, motorized/ battery operated wheelchair, artificial limbs, etc. for physically challenged individuals. The items purchased will be given to the beneficiaries at a public function. All applications for such assistance shall be examined and approved by a committee under Chief Medical Officer of the district to ensure proper eligibility.

2. Health

Purchase of ambulances / hearse vans. District Magistrate / Chief Medical Officer would be responsible for ownership and management of the ambulances.

Purchase of ambulances / vehicles to transport sick or injured animals in Wildlife sanctuaries and National Parks. The Wildlife Sanctuary / National Park concerned would be responsible for ownership and management of the ambulances.

3. Education

Computers- Purchase of computers, computer software along with training for government and government aided institutions.

Mobile Library- for educational institutions belonging to Centre, State, U.T or Local government.

Furniture- up to Rs 50 lakh for primary and secondary government and government aided schools.

Purchase of books for schools, colleges and public library, with a limit of Rs 22 lakh per year.

Purchase of vehicles including school buses, vans, etc.

4. Infrastructure

Retrofitting of public buildings, government schools, government hospitals, shelter houses, heritage buildings (with special permission from Archeological Survey of India).

New borings in place of hand pumps in lieu of the existing non-functional hand pumps.

Construction of Railway stations to facilitate easy access to railways and boarding and de-boarding from a train.

Construction of buildings of Bar Associations.

Provision of solar light in public places.

Provision of Bio-digesters in public places.

Installation of CCTV camera systems for security surveillance at strategic locations.

Assistance to cooperative societies for community infrastructure and public utility building works.

5. Centrally Sponsored Schemes

Utilization of MPLAD funds to augment Central share and State share for the implementation of a Centrally Sponsored Scheme. For example, schemes such as National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, Panchayat Yuva Krida aur Khel Abhiyan, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, etc.

This would cover all schemes providing assets for individual or family use.

The MP cannot add or change the beneficiary list under the scheme. The implementation would be as per the guidelines of the scheme.

Funding Mechanism

Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation shall release the annual entitlement to the District Administration in two installments of Rs 2.5 crore each.

The first installment will be released subject to the following-
o Utilization Certificate (UC) of previous year covering at least 80% of the expenditure of the first installment of the previous year has been furnished. (UC has to be furnished by the District Magistrate to Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation) The second will be released subject to the following.

In Concluding section, with wide thinking and responsibilities all the constituency MPs have to focus on their field development for add value to our Indian people

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