

## 'Parliamentarianism' of Somnath Chatterjee

### What is the issue?

\n\n

\n

- Somnath Chatterjee who formerly held the office of Speaker in 14th Lok Sabha passed away recently.

\n

- The contributions made by him to the parliamentary practices in Indian democracy are worth remembering.

\n

\n\n

### What are the noteworthy contributions?

\n\n

\n

- **Telecast** - His tenure was replete with people-centric parliamentary innovations.

\n

- He wanted to extend the visitors' gallery of Parliament to every household in the country.

\n

- It began with the live telecast of the "zero hour" proceedings.

\n

- He personally monitored the evolution of the Lok Sabha television channel.

\n

- It is the world's first 24×7 TV channel to be owned and operated by Parliament.

\n

- Its purpose is to inform people of the goings-on in Parliament on a real time basis.

\n

- **Knowledge** - He opened up the rich Parliament Library to researchers and media persons.

\n

- A new museum and children's corner in the Parliament Library building was created.

\n

- A parliamentary fora on diverse subjects was set up and a lecture series was introduced.  
\n
- This was to equip the members with knowledge on emerging trends.  
\n
- The institution of parliamentary research fellowships, Hiren Mukherjee Memorial Lecture were some of the many initiatives under his leadership.  
\n
- **Legislature** - The dearest to Chatterjee was the principle of accountability.  
\n
- Also, the constitutionally-guaranteed supremacy of the legislature in its own sphere.  
\n
- His noteworthy bold steps in parliament in this regard include -  
\n

\n\n

- \n
- i. enhancing the number of Standing Committees for improved oversight  
\n
- ii. directions for the compulsory presentation of action taken on Standing Committee reports  
\n
- iii. admission of probably the highest number of calling attention notices  
\n
- iv. his insistence on short discussions and adjournment motions  
\n

\n\n

- \n
- **Parliamentary diplomacy** - This is another innovation that took shape under his leadership.  
\n
- Visits by Indian parliamentary delegations abroad were encouraged.  
\n
- This was done in alignment with the country's foreign policy orientation and significantly benefitted India.  
\n
- E.g. India's election to the position of Chairman of the Executive Committee of Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.  
\n
- **Judiciary** - He held the judiciary in the highest esteem.  
\n
- He did question the constitutional validity of judicial orders regarding the conduct of the floor test in the hung Jharkhand legislature.

\n

- However, his advice to the people who mattered was to honour the order of the Supreme Court.

\n

- He emphasised the dignity of all institutions, including the judiciary.

\n

- **Decisions** - He has disposed of, a record number of Tenth Schedule (anti-defection) matters in the shortest possible time, in a fair and judicious manner.

\n

- Not one of his many quasi-judicial pronouncements was ever challenged.

\n

- The orders passed by him have set benchmarks in the adjudication of anti-defection matters.

\n

- The events and achievements, and the debates generated during his period shall guide leaders in all institutions.

\n

- It is undeniable that Somnath Chatterjee has been one of India's brightest and the most outstanding parliamentarians.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

**Source: Indian Express**

\n

