

## Special Session of Parliament

### Why in news?

The Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, announced that a “special session” of Parliament would be held in September 2023.

### When does Parliament meet?

- **Parliamentary system** - The Constitution of India provides for a parliamentary form of government.
  - **Articles 74 and 75** -In the Centre and
  - **Articles 163 and 164**- In the states.
- **Ivor Jennings** called the parliamentary system as 'cabinet system' because the cabinet is the nucleus of power in a parliamentary system.
- **Sessions** - When the Parliament meet for discussing various agenda and approving bills, motions with a scheduled meeting, it is called session.
- India's Parliament has **no fixed calendar** of sittings.
- In 1955, a Lok Sabha committee had proposed a timetable for parliamentary sessions but was never implemented.
- The Parliament holds **3 sessions** in a year.
  - Budget session (February-May)
  - Monsoon Session (July-August)
  - Winter Session (November-December)
- **Determining the sessions** - The **Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs** determines the date and duration of parliamentary sessions.
- It currently has **10 Ministers**, including those for Defence, Home, Finance, Agriculture, Tribal Affairs, Parliamentary Affairs, and Information and Broadcasting.
- The **Law Minister and the Minister of State for External Affairs** are special invitees to the Committee.
- The President is informed about the Committee's decision, who then summons Members of Parliament to meet for the session.

### What does the Constitution say about Parliamentary sessions?

- The framers of the Constitution borrowed it from the **Government of India Act of 1935**.
- It allowed the **British Governor General** to call a session of the central legislature at his discretion, requiring that the gap between two sessions should not be **more than 12 months**.
- However, the Constitution specifies that **6 months** should not elapse between two parliamentary sessions.

## Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha Meeting

- **Pre independence-** The Central Assembly met for a little more than 60 days a year.
- **Post-independence-** It increased to 120 days a year in the first 20 years after Independence. Since then, the sitting days of the national legislature have declined.
- Between 2002 and 2021, Lok Sabha averaged 67 working days.
- In 2022, 28 state Assemblies met for 21 days on average.
- **Recommendations-** Conference of presiding officers has recommended that Parliament should meet for more than 100 days.
- The National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution set up in 2000 made a similar recommendation.
- **Private member bill-** Individual MPs have introduced private member Bills that stipulated increased sitting days for Parliament.
- Private member Bill in 2017 suggested that Parliament should meet for 4 sessions in a year, including a special session of 15 days for debating matters of urgent public importance.
- **Lok Sabha committee 1955-** It recommended that the Parliament would be in session for 8 months every year.
- **International practice-** The US Congress and parliaments of Canada, Germany, and the UK are in session throughout the year.

## What is a special session of Parliament?

*The Constitution does not use the term “special session”.*

- The term sometimes refers to sessions the government has convened for specific occasions, like commemorating parliamentary or national milestones.
- **Summon** - The ***President***, who summons a regular Parliamentary session will summon this session also as per provisions of Article 85(1) of the Constitution.

*Article 85(1) states that “The President shall from time to time summon each House of Parliament to meet at such time and place as he/she thinks fit”*

- **Chair-** For the two Houses to be in session, the ***Presiding Officers*** should chair their proceedings.
- The presiding officers can also direct that the proceedings of their respective Houses would be limited.
- The procedural devices like question hour would not be available to MPs during the session.
- **Article 352** of the Constitution does refer to a “special sitting of the House” which deals with proclamation of emergency.
- **44<sup>th</sup> amendment act 1978** added the part related to special sitting to add safeguards to the power of proclaiming emergency in the country.
- If a Proclamation of Emergency is issued and Parliament is not in session, then one-tenth of Lok Sabha MPs can ask the President to convene a special meeting to disapprove the Emergency.

## What is the history of special sessions?

- **Division-** The special sessions can be divided into two parts
  - **Proper special sessions-** It happens with debates or discussions, and
  - **Midnight sessions-** It happens without any debates.
- **Agenda-** It has been to either celebrate a historical legacy like the Indian freedom struggle and Indian Independence or to pass a bill.
- It holds a special place in the parliamentary calendar and history of democratic India.

Special session with debates	Midnight special sessions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>1962-</b> It was organised to discuss India-China war situation while the war was still on.</li><li>• <b>1997-</b> It was organised to mark 50 years of India's independence.</li><li>• <b>2015-</b> It was a part of year-long celebrations to pay respects to the architect of the Indian Constitution, Dr Ambedkar.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>1947-</b> It was held on the eve of India's independence.</li><li>• <b>1972-</b> To celebrate 25 years of India's independence.</li><li>• <b>1992-</b> To mark the 50th anniversary of the 'Quit India Movement'.</li><li>• <b>1997-</b> To mark 50 years of independence.</li><li>• <b>2017-</b> It was for the first time, a bill was discussed in a special session (for the GST rollout).</li></ul>

- **Special sitting in Lok Sabha-** It was organised on May 13, 2012, a Sunday, to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the first sitting of the Indian Parliament.
- **Special sitting in Rajya Sabha-** It was organised in 1977 and 1991 when the Lok Sabha was under dissolution to decide on the President's Rule.
- **2023 special session-** Amidst Amrit Kaal, Parliament is looking forward to have fruitful discussions and debates.

## References

1. [Indian Express- Special session of Parliament](#)
2. [Deccan Herald | What is a Special Session of Parliament?](#)