
COMMITTEE ON THE WELFARE OF SCHEDULED CASTES AND SCHEDULED TRIBES

Constitution and Functions

The Committee on the Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes consists of 30 Members—20 elected by Lok Sabha from amongst its Members in accordance with the System of proportional representation by means of single transferable vote and 10 nominated by Rajya Sabha from amongst its Members. The Chairman of the Committee is appointed by the Speaker from amongst the Members of the Committee.

A Minister is not eligible for election to the Committee. If a Member after his election to the Committee is appointed a Minister he ceases to be a Member of the Committee from the date of such appointment.

The term of the Committee does not exceed one year.

The functions of the Committee on the Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are:

- (a) to consider the reports submitted by the *[National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes under article 338(5) of the Constitution] and to report as to the measures that should be taken by the Union Government in respect of matters within the purview of the Union Government including the Administration of the Union Territories;
- (b) to report on the action taken by the Union Government and the Administration of the Union Territories on the measures proposed by the Committee;
- (c) to examine the measures taken by the Union Government to secure due representation of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in services and posts under its control (including appointments in the Public Sector Undertakings, Nationalised Banks, Statutory and Semi-Government Bodies and in the Union Territories) having regard to the provisions of article 335;

* Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes substituted as National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in Terms of the Constitution (Sixty-Fifth Amendment Act), 1990 which came into force from 12.3.1992.

- (d) to report on the working of the welfare programmes for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Union Territories; and
- (e) to examine such other matters as may deem fit to the Committee or are specifically referred to it by the House or the Speaker.

This Committee, like other Parliamentary Committees has all the powers to call for the detailed information from the Ministries of the Government, Public Undertakings, Nationalised Banks and various organisations in respect of subjects taken up by the Committee for examination and to examine official and non-official witnesses. The Committee also takes the assistance of the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in pursuing matters raised in its Reports in regard to the subjects under examination by the Committee.

Procedure of Work of the Committee

From time to time the Committee selects such subjects pertaining to the welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes as may deem fit to the Committee.

The Committee may also examine matters of special interest relating to the welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes which may arise, or come to light in the course of its working or which may be specifically referred to it by the House or by the Speaker.

The Committee ask for preliminary material from the Ministry/ Department/Public Undertaking/ Nationalised Bank or other Statutory or Government Body connected with the subject matter under examination for use of the Members of the Committee.

The Committee may, from time to time, appoint one or more Sub-Committees/Study Groups for carrying out detailed examination of various subjects.

If it appears to the Committee that it is necessary for the purpose of its examination that an “on-the-spot,” study should be made, the Committee divides itself into Study Groups consisting of a few members to undertake tours to make a study of the problems of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and the measures taken or being taken for the welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and prepare Study Reports.

When the Committee or its Study Group is on study tour, only informal discussions are held at the places of visit. During such discussions no formal evidence is recorded nor any decision taken. Later, in the light of these informal discussions and the memoranda and other information received, official and, where considered necessary, non-official witnesses are invited to tender evidence at formal sittings of the Committee held in Parliament House or Parliament House Annexe, New Delhi.

The procedure for examination of the official/non-official witnesses, as laid down by the Committee, is as follows:—

- (i) The programme for taking the evidence of the officials and non-officials on various subjects under examination by the Committee is drawn up and the witnesses are invited to appear before the Committee on the appointed dates to tender evidence. As a rule, examination of non-officials precedes that of the officials on the subjects concerned.
- (ii) The purpose in examining the witnesses is to obtain information on (a) the working of the organisations, and (b) subjects concerned which are examined by the Committee. If it is necessary to enquire into certain deals regarding the personnel employed by the Ministry, Public Undertaking/Nationalised Bank, Statutory or Government organisation concerned, the questions should not, as far as possible, name particular individuals.
- (iii) In the case of the Official witnesses generally the Secretary of the Ministry is the principal spokesman. The Chairman or the Convener first welcomes the principal spokesman and then asks him to introduce his colleagues to the Committee.
- (iv) The Chairman or the Convener then asks questions one by one.
- (v) After the Chairman or the Convener has put his question, he gives a chance to other members who desire to ask questions for clarification or elucidation of the point under discussion.

Disposal of Complaints/Representations

The Committee have laid down the following procedure for dealing with representations/complaints:—

- (i) Representations from Government employees in regard to their service matters are not entertained by the Committee as per direction from the Speaker. Government servants have a prescribed hierarchy of Appellate and Reviewing Authorities with the President at the top. Such representations, when received are forwarded to the Ministry/Department/Organisation concerned for appropriate action.
- (ii) Memoranda/representations on matters which are within the purview of the State Governments are forwarded to the Chief Secretaries of the State Governments concerned for disposal and the petitioner is informed of the action taken.
- (iii) Memoranda/representations which make general suggestions for the welfare and improvement of the conditions of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are considered by the Committee on merit while dealing with the subjects referred to in those suggestions.
- (iv) Anonymous representations, representations couched in intemperate and indecorous language or on matters which are *sub-judice* are filed on receipt in the Secretariat of the Committee.

Reports of the Committee

The observations/recommendations of the Committee are embodied in its Reports which are presented to both the Houses of Parliament.

Achievements

The Committee since its inception in 1968 has presented to Parliament as many as 176 Original Reports and 169 Action Taken Reports. In addition, 191 Reports on the Study Tours undertaken by different Study Groups of the Committee have also been laid on the Table of both Houses of Parliament.

Names of the Chairmen of the Committee corresponding to their terms from its inception

1. Shri D. Basumatari (1968-70, 1973-76)
2. Sardar Buta Singh (1971-73)
3. Shri N.R. Laskar (1976-77)
4. Shri Ram Dhan (1977-79)
5. Shri Rinching Khandu Khrieme (1979-80)
6. Shri R.R. Bhole (1980-82)
7. Shri A.C. Das (1982-85, 1990-91)
8. Shri K.D. Sultanpuri (1985-87)
9. Shri Ram Ratan Ram (1987-88)
10. Shri Arvind Netam (1988-90)
11. Shri K. Pradhani (1991-93), (1996-98)
12. Shri Parasram Bhardwaj (1993-96)
13. Shri Kariya Munda (1998-2001)
14. Shri Ratilal Kalidas Varma (2001-2004)

LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI

APRIL, 2004

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