

COMMITTEE ON THE WELFARE OF SCHEDULED CASTES AND SCHEDULED TRIBES

Introduction:

Constitution of the Committee:

The Committee on the Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes consists of 30 Members – 20 elected by the Lok Sabha and 10 by the Rajya Sabha from amongst their Members in accordance with the system of proportional representation by means of single transferable vote. The Chairperson 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 an appointment.

Functions of the Committee:

The term of the Committee does not exceed one year. Following are the functions of the Committee.

(a) to consider the reports submitted by the [National Commission for the Scheduled Castes and the National Commission for the Scheduled Tribes]* under article 338(5)(d) and 338A (5)(d) respectively 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;

(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 other such matters as may deem fit by 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 of official and non-official witnesses.

Procedure of Work of the Committee:

The Committee asks for preliminary material from Ministries/Public Undertakings, Nationalised Banks or other statutory or Government bodies connected with the subject matters under examination for the use of 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 and where it is 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 mentioned below:-

(i) The programme for taking the evidence of 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 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 Undertakings/Nationalised Banks, statutory and Government organisations 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 spokesperson. The Chairperson or the Convener first welcomes the principal spokesperson and then asks him to introduce his colleagues to the Committee.

(iv) The Chairperson or the Convener then asks questions one by one.

(v) After the Chairperson or the Convener puts his question, he gives a chance to other Members who desire to ask questions for clarification or elucidation of points under discussion.

Disposal of Complaints/Representations

The following procedure have been laid down for dealing with representations/complaints:--

(i) Representations from Government employees with regard to their service matters are not entertained by the Committee as per the 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 Ministries/Departments/ Organisations concerned for an appropriate action.

(ii) Memoranda/representations on matters which are within the purview of the State Governments are forwarded to Chief Secretaries of State Governments concerned for disposal and thereafter, petitioners are informed about 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 as presented to both the Houses of Parliament.

Achievements

The Committee since its inception in 1968 has presented to Parliament as many as 238 Original Reports and 227 Action Taken Reports. In addition, 178 Reports on Study Tours undertaken by different Study Groups of the Committee have also been laid on the Table of both the Houses of Parliament. (till 30 April, 2022).

Names of Chairpersons of the Committee corresponding to their terms since inception

1. Shri D. Basumatari (1968-70, 1973-76)
2. Shri Buta Singh (1971 -73)
3. Shri N.R. Laskar (1976-77)
4. Shri Ram Dhan (1977-79)
5. Shri Rinching Khandu Khrima (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 Karia Munda (1998-2001)
14. Shri Ratilal Kalidas Varma (2001-2004)
15. Dr. Satyanarayan Jatiya (2004-2006)
16. Shri Ratilal Kalidas Varma (2006-2009)
17. Shri Gobinda Chandra Naskar (2009-2014)
18. Shri Faggan Singh Kulaste (2014-2016)
19. Dr (Prof.) Kirit Premjibhai Solanki (2016-

*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 w.e.f. 12.3.1992. Subsequently, in pursuance of the Constitution (Eighty-Ninth Amendment) Act, 2003, National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes was bifurcated into National Commission for the Scheduled Castes and the National Commission for the Scheduled Tribes.