

Concept Note

Building the Republic: Deliberation and Legislation in India's Constitutional Democracy

"If we wish to maintain democracy not merely in form but also in fact, what must we do? The first thing in my judgement we must do is to hold fast to constitutional methods of achieving our social and economic objectives."- B.R. Ambedkar

As India enters into the 72nd year of its constitutional republic on 26th January, we need to recognise that the principles laid down in the Constitution, and the democratic republic it sustains, are alive only because of the constant toils and endeavour of its people. Our constitutional democracy stands on the values of deliberation, dialogue, debate and dissent. This includes the quality of deliberation and legislation making process in Constitutional bodies, such as the parliament, state legislatures and local governments as well as the right to debate and dissent in the democratic society at large.

Our experience has shown that deliberation in the Constitutional bodies is at times, not given primacy and legislations are passed without adequate discussion. PRS Legislative Research's data shows the 16th Lok Sabha worked for 1,615 hours, 40% lower than the average of all full term Lok Sabhas (2,689 hours). While bills were discussed more in the 16th Lok Sabha as compared to 15th, for the proper scrutiny of bills, parliamentary committees play a pivotal role. In the 16th Lok Sabha however, only 25% of the bills introduced were referred to Committees, much lower than 71% and 60% in the 15th and 14th Lok Sabha respectively. Discussion of budget has also reduced over the years- in 2018-19, 100% of the budgetary expenditures were passed without discussion.¹

*In this context, Praja aims to organise a webinar '**Building the Republic: Deliberation and Legislation in India's Constitutional Democracy**' on 22nd January, 2021. The webinar aims to discuss the various aspects and importance of deliberation in governance, the current challenges in this regard and the way ahead for India's democracy with representatives from civil society, elected representatives, administrative officers and the media.*

¹ <https://tinyurl.com/y34wpe3j>

Schedule

Date: 22nd January, 2021

Time: 3pm to 4.30pm

Online Platform: Zoom

Time	Speakers (Tentative)
3pm to 3.05pm	Nitai Mehta, Founder and Trustee, Praja Foundation
3.05pm to 3.10pm	Chakshu Roy, Head, Legislative and Civic Engagement Initiatives, PRS Legislative Research
3.10pm to 3.20pm	Prithviraj Chavan, Member of Legislative Assembly, Maharashtra, former Chief Minister of Maharashtra, and former Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Government of India
3.20pm to 3.30pm	Rahul Dev, Senior Journalist, Honorary Advisor, Speakers Research Initiative and Managing Trustee, Samyak Foundation.
3.30pm to 3.40pm	Jayaprakash Narayan, Founder, Foundation for Democratic Reforms and former Member of Legislative Assembly, Andhra Pradesh
3.40pm to 4pm	Moderated Discussion among the Panelists
4pm to 4.20pm	Open Discussion (Questions from Audience through Chat Box)
4.20pm to 4.30pm	Moderator and Praja Team- Closing