

Parliament and Central Government

In the VII class we learnt, the Constitution provides for Parliamentary form of governing the country in which the Parliament is the highest law making body. About the law making bodies at the state level. We saw that the Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) in each state make the laws for their state. Each State makes its own laws only on certain aspects. There are executives at the state level who implement laws and policies made by legislative houses. This year we shall study about Parliament at national level and its working.

Role of the Parliament

Among the many TV channels you can also watch a channel called Lok Sabha TV. It telecasts daily the discussions taking place in the Parliament House in New Delhi. Watch this channel sometime to get an idea of the functioning of the Parliament.



Our Parliament has many important functions. Among them making laws for the entire country is the most important. It also makes policies for the entire country – how to use our forests, natural resources like mines, about education, about our relations with other countries, about industries and agriculture etc. The governments are expected to implement programmes in accordance with those policies. For example, in 1986, the Parliament adopted a National Policy on Education, which till today guides the programmes relating to education. In the year 2009 the Parliament passed the ‘Right of children to free and compulsory education Act’ (or law) in order to ensure that all children get quality education.

- Find out about some important policies and laws made by the Parliament. Make a presentation about it in the class.



Fig 14.1: Indian Parliament House in New Delhi

The government which rules the country implements the laws made by the Parliament for the development and welfare. While discussions are going on in the Parliament any of the members may ask questions for clarification on any of the issues and respective members from the government have to answer them. Thus the government is answerable to the Parliament. The Parliament also approves the income and expenditure of the government. Every year the government presents the annual budget for the approval of the Parliament.

- What do you think are the advantages of having a Parliamentary form of government in which the government members are answerable to the Parliament?
- Should the Parliament only make laws and not control the government in its functioning? Discuss in the class.
- Find out if there are other kinds of government where the government is not responsible to the Parliament or legislature.

The Houses of Parliament

There are two Houses of Parliament - Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. The members of the Lok Sabha are directly elected by the people while the Rajya Sabha members are elected by the members of the State Legislatures. The Rajya Sabha can have a maximum of 250 members. The state

Legislative Assemblies and Union Territories elect their representatives to the Rajya Sabha. This is one way a link is established between the State governments and the legislative process at the Centre. The Rajya Sabha members are elected for a term of six years. Every two years about one third of the members retire and new members are elected in their place.

Powers of the Houses

According to the Constitution for most matters, the Lok Sabha exercises supreme power. Let us see how:

1. Any ordinary law needs to be passed by both the Houses. But if there is a difference between the two Houses, the final decision is taken in a joint session in which members of both the Houses sit together. As Lok Sabha has more members, it is likely that its view will prevail in such a meeting.

2. Lok Sabha exercises more powers in money matters. Once the Lok Sabha passes the budget of the government or any other money related law, the Rajya Sabha cannot reject it.

3. Most importantly, the Lok Sabha controls the Council of Ministers. Only a person who enjoys the support of the majority of the members in the Lok Sabha is appointed as the Prime Minister. If the majority of the Lok Sabha members say they have 'no confidence' in the Council of Ministers, all ministers including the Prime Minister, have to quit. The Rajya Sabha does not have this power.

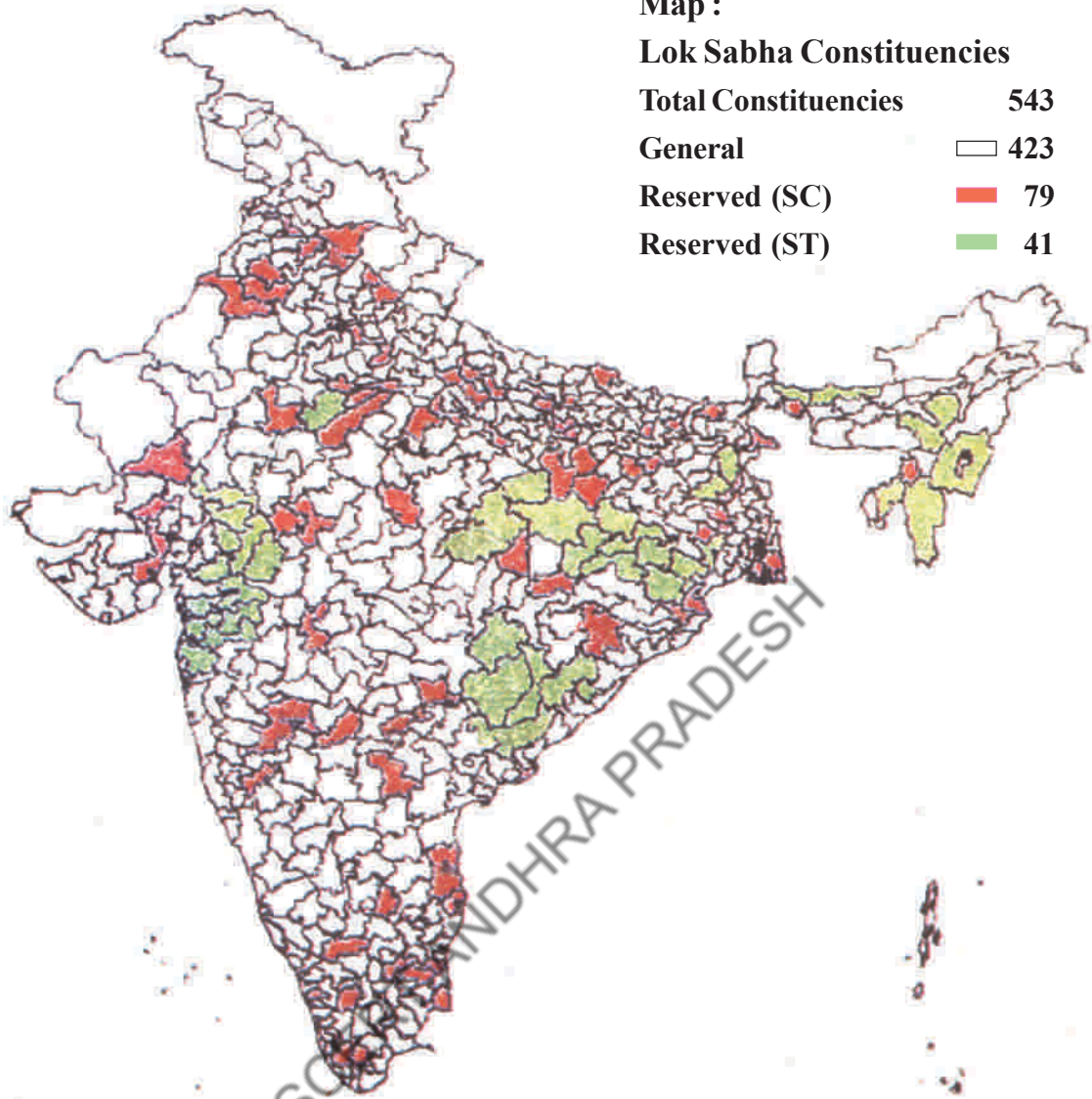
Lok Sabha Constituencies

Total Constituencies 543

General 423

Reserved (SC) 79

Reserved (ST) 41



State	No.	State	No.	State	No.
Andhra Pradesh	25	Jammu & Kashmir	6	Odisha	21
Telangana	17	Jharkhand	14	Punjab	13
Arunachal Pradesh	2	Karnataka	28	Rajasthan	25
Assom	14	Kerala	20	Sikkim	1
Bihar	40	Madhya Pradesh	29	Tamilnadu	39
Chhattisgarh	11	Maharashtra	48	Telangana	17
Goa	2	Manipur	2	Tripura	2
Gujarat	26	Meghalaya	2	Uttarakhand	5
Haryana	10	Mizoram	1	Uttar Pradesh	80
Himachal Pradesh	4	Nagaland	1	West Bengal	42
Union Territories					
Andaman and Nicobar Islands	1	Daman and Diu	1	Delhi(the NCT of Delhi)	7
Chandigarh	1	Lakshadweep	1	Nominated by the president of India	
Dadra and Nagar Haveli	1	Pondicherry	1	Anglo Indians	2

Table showing state wise Lok Sabha Constituencies

- Can you identify the basic difference between Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha?
- Azhar feels that it is better to give more powers to Rajya Sabha because they are mostly wiser people belonging to different political parties. Mumtaz feels Rajya Sabha should not be given any more powers because they are not directly elected by people. What do you think about their feelings?

divided into Constituencies (seats) from which members of the Lok Sabha are elected. States with a large population have more Constituencies than states with smaller population. Thus, Uttar Pradesh has 80 Constituencies while Meghalaya has only two Constituencies. Andhra Pradesh has 25 Constituencies and the Union Territory of Chandigarh has one Constituency.

See the map and tables given in the previous page and answer the following questions:

Elections to Lok Sabha

Lok Sabha has been given this special position because it is directly elected by the people. Let us see how this happens.



Normally, elections to the Lok Sabha are held every five years. All citizens who are of 18 years or above can vote in the elections. It is also necessary that they register their names in the Constituency they live in. A person above the age of 25 years can contest in an election to become a member of the Lok Sabha. There are 545 Lok Sabha seats. The states and Union Territories in India are

- What is the number of Lok Sabha Constituencies in your state and two neighbouring states?
- Which states have more than 30 Lok Sabha Constituencies?
- Why do so many states have such large number of Constituencies?
- Why are some Constituencies small in area while others are very big?
- Are the Constituencies reserved for the SCs and STs evenly spread all over the entire country or are there more in some areas?

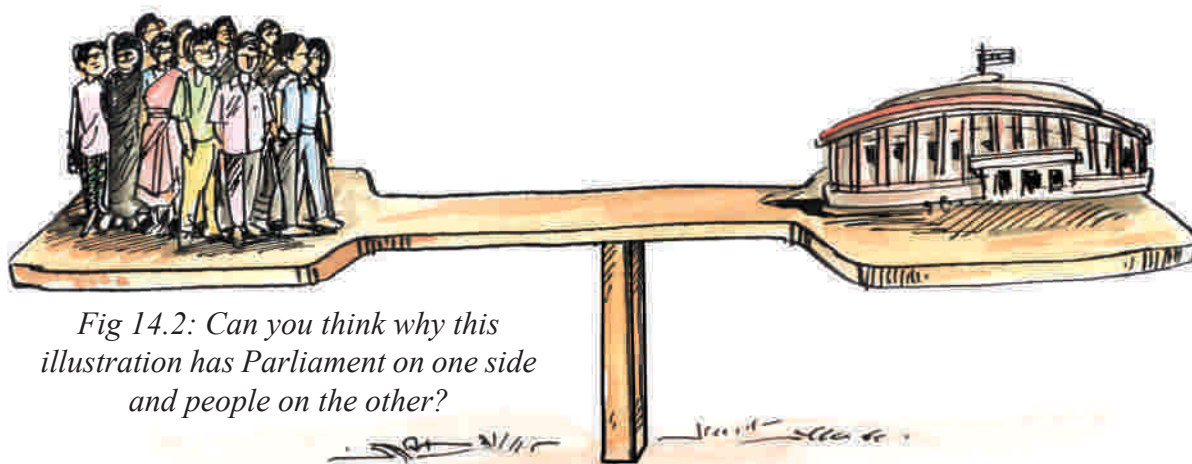


Fig 14.2: Can you think why this illustration has Parliament on one side and people on the other?

The First Elections to Lok Sabha

Elections are an important aspect of our current political lives. It is the occasion where we choose our representatives. For a nation like ours with large population conducting elections is a big task. Let us take a case study of the first elections held in 1951-52 to understand this. It took four months to conduct these elections.

It was based on universal adult franchise, every citizen who was twenty-one years of age or older had the right to vote. At that time there were more than 17,30,00,000 people who could vote. For most of them, this was their first opportunity to vote. Most of them were illiterate and lived in rural areas. There was one big question: “How will the people respond to this opportunity?”

Some people said, “The elections are ‘a leap in the dark’, not suitable for a country like India. India is a caste-based society in which many people do not accept the idea that everyone is equal. So it won’t be possible to have a democratic election.”

There were other people who were very hopeful. They said, “Indians have participated in the National Movement to gain freedom from the British. They want to elect a government of their own choice. They want the government to work towards creating a society where everyone is treated equally. They also want the government to improve the living conditions of the people. Thus everyone should have an equal opportunity to elect a government of their choice.” To such people, the elections were ‘an act of faith’.

- If you had been living at that time, which side would you have agreed with? Would you have considered it a good idea for India to try to have universal adult franchise and conduct elections? Give reasons.

An Election Commission was set up to conduct the elections in a free and fair manner. Making arrangements for the first elections was a large and complex task. First, a house-to-house survey was carried out to register the eligible voters.

People who contested elections belonged to political parties or were Independents. Election Commission gave a symbol to each of these candidates. These symbols were painted on the ballot boxes in which the votes had to be cast. The voters had to put their ballot paper into the box of the candidate they wanted to vote for. Screens were set up so that the voting (ballot) was secret.

Over 2,24,000 polling booths were set up across the country. Over 25,00,000 steel ballot boxes were made. Nearly 62,00,00,000 ballot papers were printed. About 10 lakh officials supervised the polls. Nearly 17,500 candidates had contested the elections across the country. Finally, 489 people were elected to the first Lok Sabha. The elections were conducted in a fair, free, impartial and orderly manner, with very little violence.

The response of the people to the new opportunity was tremendous. They participated in the polls, fully aware that their vote was a prized possession. In many places, the people treated elections as a

festival and a public celebration. They dressed up for the occasion in festive clothing. Women wore their silver jewellery. Poor and illiterate people demonstrated their ability to exercise their right to vote carefully, though the voting procedures were complicated.

There was a large turnout of voters not only in the urban areas but also in the rural areas. There was a very high participation of dalits and adivasis. Another remarkable feature of the elections was the wide participation of women - nearly 40 percent of the women who were eligible, cast their votes. This was very high considering the fact that many communities practiced *purdah* system under which women did not appear in public.

What is significant about these elections was that no other nation had ever conducted such a large scale election in which all citizens, including women, illiterate and poor, were given the power to vote. More than 46 percent of the eligible voters exercised their power to vote.

- Who is the Lok Sabha member from your area? Name a few other MPs from your state or neighbouring states.
- Find out which political parties they belong to.
- Discuss the meaning of the following with your teacher:

1. candidate	2. Constituency
3. ballot	4. EVM
5. election campaign	6. Election Commission
7. Voters' List	8. Procedure of voting
	9. Free and fair elections

- Find out the symbols used by different political parties today.
- Why were the first elections a 'large and complex task'?
- Discuss with your teachers and parents to learn about how elections are conducted today.
- Write down some differences between the first elections and elections held today - ballot box and sheets, age of voting.
- Why should the voting be secret?

Challenges in conducting free and fair elections

In an ideal situation, every voter is expected to know about the different candidates, their policies and decide whose policies they would prefer and who they think can represent their interests best in the Parliament and then vote. He or she should not be subjected to any pressure to vote for this or that candidate because her husband told her or her employer told her or her caste leader or religious teacher ordered her or someone paid money. Everyone should decide independently.

However, in actual practice, people vote based on other considerations like caste or religion or money or other gifts etc. Often powerful local people terrorise people to vote for a certain candidate. Sometimes the party in the government uses the government machinery to influence voters. The Election Commission in recent times has taken very strict measures to control these illegal practices. Find out about some of these measures.

There have been many Lok Sabha elections since the first one. The Table below gives the percentage (%) of people who voted in each election. Use this information to answer the following questions.

- How many Lok Sabha elections have been held?
- Why do you think it is important to look at the percentage of people who cast their votes? What does it tell us?
- Why do you think many eligible voters did not vote? Discuss the possible reasons.
- What were the opinions expressed by different people at the time of the first elections?

Table: Percentage of voters in various Lok Sabha elections

<i>Year of Lok Sabha election</i>	<i>Percentage of voters who voted</i>
1952	46 %
1957	48 %
1962	55 %
1967	61 %
1971	55 %
1977	60 %
1980	57 %
1985	64 %
1989	62 %
1991	56 %
1996	58 %
1998	62 %
1999	59 %
2004	58 %
2009	58 %

Some interesting facts about Lok Sabha Elections in 2009

Number of Parliamentary Constituencies	543
Total electors	71,69,85,101
Number of Candidates contested	8,070
Male candidates contested (93.1 %)	7,514
Women candidates contested (6.9 %)	556
Number of Polling Stations setup	8,34,919
Number of micro observers deployed	1,39,284
Polling Staff deployed	46,90,575
Number of videographers deployed	74,729
Number of digital cameras deployed	40,599
Number of Special trains deployed	119
Number of Helicopters deployed	55

- Parliament elections held in 2014. Collect the information based on above data and present in your classroom.

- A survey showed that among the uneducated and poor the percentage of people who voted in 1996 was 61%. However, it was only 53% among graduates. What could be the reasons for this difference? Discuss.

Not all laws are made in the Parliament, we can see this here.

The Central List: Subjects on which laws can be made only by the Parliament.

There are many subjects for which only Parliament can make laws. These laws apply to the whole country. For example, our country has a common currency - the rupee. So any law relating to money and banking can only be made by Parliament. Similarly, we must have common rules and regulations for the telephone and postal system. Another subject which is under the control of Parliament is the country's defence. All the laws relating to military forces and defence can only be made by the Parliament.

The State List: Subjects on which laws can be made only by State Legislative Assemblies

On certain subjects, only a State Legislative Assembly can make laws. Hence, different states can have different laws on any of these subjects. For example, Sales Tax is charged on the sale and purchase of goods within a state. This is a major source of revenue for the State Governments. Each state has made its own law for the collection of this tax. Hence there are differences between states in the list of things which are taxed and also in the rates at which they are taxed.

It is the responsibility of the state to ensure proper road communications within its boundaries. Therefore the construction and maintenance of all roads, other than national highways, is done by the state. Important subjects that are the responsibility of the State Government are agriculture, irrigation, police and health care. They all come in the State List and the State Legislative Assemblies make laws relating to these subjects.

The Concurrent List: Subjects on which laws can be made by both Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies

There are certain subjects on which both Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies can make laws. For example, making education policy is the duty of both the Central and State Governments. In every state, you find schools run by the Central Government, such as the Kendriya Vidyalayas or Central Schools, as well as schools run by the Education Department of the State Government. Other important subjects on which both the Central Government and State Governments make the laws are those relating to factories or industries, electricity, labour etc. However, if both Parliament and a State Legislative Assembly make a law on a subject and these laws clash or contradict each other, the law made by Parliament takes precedence over the law made by the State Legislative Assembly.



- Recall the laws about which we studied last year. Find out the new laws that are being discussed in state legislative houses and Parliament during their last meeting.

The President and The Vice-President

The MLA's of all the states and the members of both houses of the Parliament elect the President. Both the Houses of Parliament elect the Vice-President. The Vice-President chairs the Rajya Sabha meetings and also performs the functions of the President if the President is absent. After the laws are passed by the Parliament, they can come into force only after the President gives his assent by signing them.

● Correct the false statements:

- 1 The President and the Vice-President are both elected by the same set of people.
- 2 Every voter in India elects the President.
- 3 All the MLAs of the Vidhan Sabha of Andhra Pradesh participate in the election of the President.
- 4 All the MLAs of all the Vidhan Sabhas and Delhi and Pondicherry and all the MPs of the Rajya Sabha and the Lok Sabha elect the President.



Fig 14.3: A night view of Rashtrapathi Bhavan on Republic Day

The Council of Ministers and Prime Minister

The Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers are chosen from among the members of Parliament (the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha). The role of Parliament is not only to make laws but also to provide members who run the government according to the laws. Hence it is said that India has a Parliamentary form of government. These two roles are separate.

One is called Legislative i.e. to make laws. The other is Executive, which is to implement the laws and decisions of the Parliament. The head of the Executive is the President.

The Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers are in charge of a large number of ministries and they have a huge staff of government employees who work under them. Thus, from the large set of people who are members of Parliament a small sub-group of



Collect the photos of the current one's of the following and paste in the given boxes.



The President of India



Vice President



Prime Minister

people become ministers and take up the work of running the government. Let us see how this is done.

All decisions of the Government of India are taken in the name of the President, who is the formal head of the country. However, the President acts according to the advice of the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers.

You may recall how members of the Vidhan Sabha choose the Chief Minister. A Prime Minister is chosen similarly by the members of the Lok Sabha. The leader of the party (or coalition) that wins a majority (more than half the seats) in the Lok Sabha is invited by the President and appointed as the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister thus has the support of a majority of the members and can then select the other ministers to form the Council of Ministers.

- Who is the current Prime Minister? Can you name a few earlier Prime Ministers?
- Find out if there are any ministers from your state in the current central government.
- Identify few important ministries and who is in charge of them at the central government.

The cabinet functions as the executive wing of the government. It has to implement the laws, and administer the country in accordance with the laws, plan programmes for development and implement them, prepare new laws or policies or changes to old laws and policies and get them approved by the Parliament. The work of the government is divided into a number of areas like Finance, Foreign Affairs, Home (internal security), Defence, Railways, Industry, Agriculture, Education, Health, etc. Each of these areas is overseen by a ministry headed by a Minister. Apart from the Minister, the ministry has a large number of officials headed by a Secretary who handle the day to day work of the ministry, study and prepare notes and proposals on various issues so that the Minister can take an informed decision on them. The implementation of these decisions is also the responsibility of the ministry officials.

Which of the following is correct about formation of government:

- Party or coalition that has support of the President forms the government.

- Party/ coalition with most number of seats forms the government.
- Party or coalition with more than half the seats forms the government.
- Election commission selects the party that will form the government.
- The person who has won with the largest number of votes in the Lok Sabha election will be the Prime Minister.

Look at the following table and write down which party could have formed the government after first Lok Sabha Election:

The First Lok Sabha Elections, 1952	
Party	Seats won
Congress	364
Communists and allies	23
Socialists	12
Kisan Mazdoor Praja Party	9
Jan Sangh	3
Hindu Mahasabha	4
Ram Rajya Parishad	3
Other parties	30
Independents	41
Total	489

Key words

- | | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Legislature | 2. Lok Sabha | 3. Rajya Sabha |
| 4. Election Commission | 5. Council of Ministers | 6. Central List |
| 7. State List | 8. Concurrent List | |

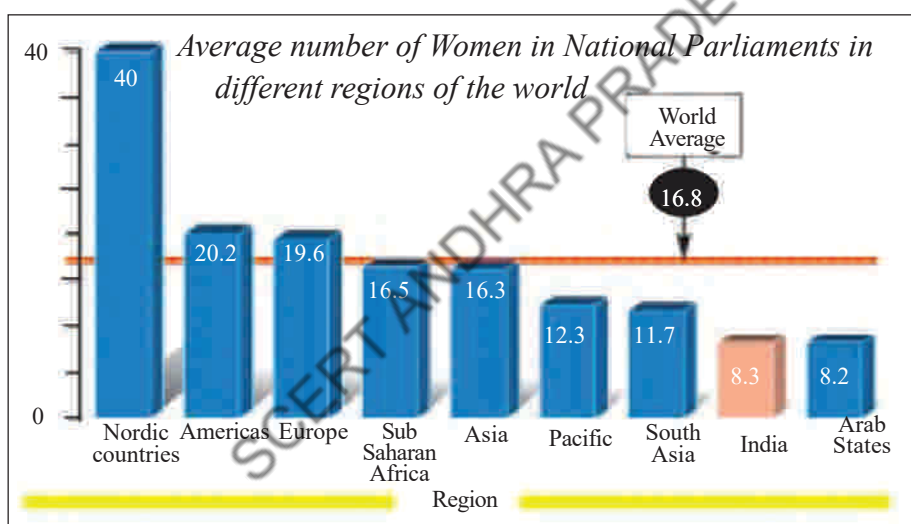


Improve your learning

1. Why were the first elections difficult to conduct? List as many reasons as you can. AS₁
2. Why do you think elections need to be free and fair? AS₁
3. For which of the following subjects can laws be made by the Members of Parliament, which by the state assembly, and which can be made by both - agriculture, railways, village hospitals, police, posts and telegraph, electricity, factories? AS₁
4. Name the two houses of the Parliament. Draw a table to show the similarities/ differences between them on the following aspects: term, number of members, more or less powerful, election process, voting for the President AS₃
5. In the 2009 Parliamentary Elections, no single party won a majority. How was the government formed? Discuss with the help of your teacher and write a paragraph. AS₁
6. Who is responsible for making the laws that are applicable for the entire country? AS₁
7. There are some gaps in the information given in the Table below. Discuss with your teacher to find the missing information and fill in the blanks. AS₃

Position	Who elects	Length of term	Eligibility (min. age, res., etc)
MLA		5 years	
MP Lok Sabha			Minimum age: 25 years
MP Rajya Sabha			
Chief Minister	Members of each state majority Party		
Prime Minister			Must be an MP
President			Minimum age: 35 years

8. Do you think the parties should be made to put up more women candidates for elections? Why? AS₁
9. Following is a study of women's representation in Parliament houses including that of India and other nations: AS₃



Based on the above information write an essay analysing the following aspects:

- Is there an adequate representation of women in our legislative houses?
- How is the idea of representation important to idea of democracy?
- What solution can be achieved for above? How will you address this issue if you are member of the Parliament? How do you think certain countries have achieved better representation of women in Parliament?

Project : When the Parliament is in session, listen to the news on the radio or television or look in the newspapers and make a list of the events that take place. Write a page on any issue discussed in the Parliament, or draw a picture of the scene in Parliament when it is being discussed.