



State Assembly Sitzings

For Prelims: State Legislature, Parliament, Ordinance, Private Member Bill, National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution

For Mains: Significance of House Sitzings on the country, Suggestion on Idle Sitzings, Benefits of Increase Sitzings

Why in News?

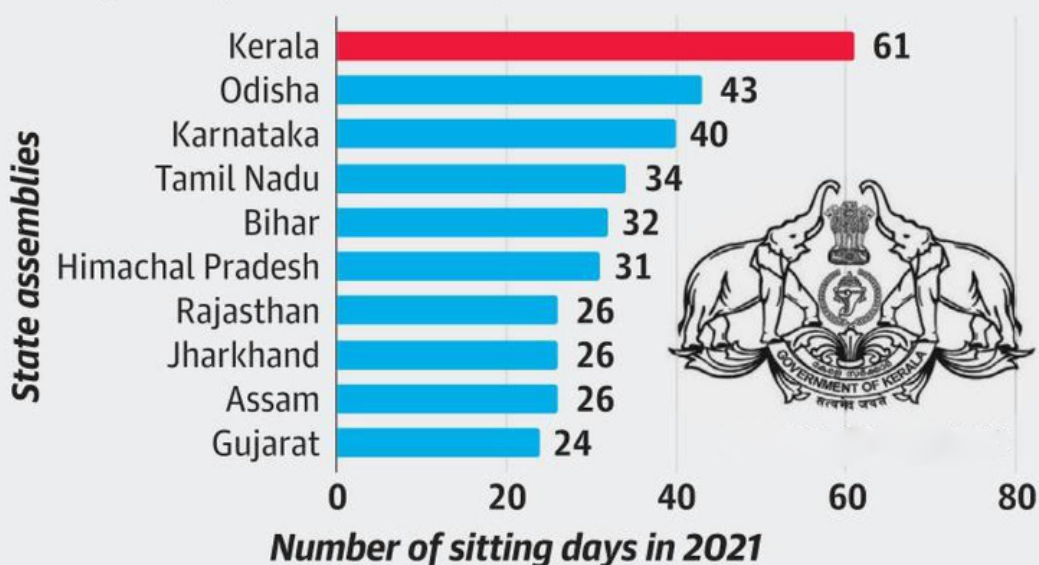
Recently, a report titled "**The Annual Review of State Laws, 2021**" was released by PRS Legislative Research.

- As per the report, Kerala got first place in 2021, with its House sitting for 61 days, the highest for any State.
- Kerala had also [promulgated 144 ordinances](#), the highest in the country last year.

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Counting the sittings

The chart shows the State Assemblies which sat for more than 20 sessions in 2021. Kerala recorded the most such sittings last year followed by Odisha and Karnataka



What are the Highlights of the Report?

- **Sittings:**
 - States such as Manipur, Odisha, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh have laid down a **minimum number of sitting days through the Rules of Procedure**, varying from 40 days in Punjab to 90 days in Uttar Pradesh.
 - In 2005, Karnataka even came out with a law — the **Karnataka Conduct of Government Business in the State Legislature Act** — with the stipulation of a minimum of 60 days
- **Ordinance:**
 - **Andhra Pradesh** with 20 ordinances and **Maharashtra** with 15 followed **Kerala**, wherein Bills replacing 33 ordinances became Acts.
 - Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh also **promulgated ordinances** to give effect to budget proposals.
- **Passage of Bill:**
 - 44% of the **Bills** adopted by 28 State Assemblies were passed within a day of their introduction.
 - Gujarat, West Bengal, Punjab and Bihar were among the eight States which **passed all Bills on the day of introduction**.
 - Karnataka, Kerala, Meghalaya, Odisha and Rajasthan **took more than five days** to pass a majority of their Bills.
 - In **Kerala**, 94% of the Bills were passed after at least five days of their introduction in the legislature.
 - In respect of **Meghalaya**, it was 80% and in the case of **Karnataka**, 70%.
- **Focus Areas of Sittings:**
 - **Education** was the top priority with 21% of all laws passed in 2021 related to this subject.
 - After Education, **Taxation and Urban Governance** accounted for the largest share of state laws passed in 2021.
 - Several of the other sectors saw crucial legislations, including ones relating to **online gaming, reservation** of jobs for local candidates from the state, and the **safety of women and children**

How often should an Idle State Assembly Meet?

- **National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution:**
 - **The National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (2000-02)**, headed by former Chief Justice of India M.N. Venkatachaliah, had prescribed that:
 - The Houses of State (/Union Territory) legislatures with:
 - **Less than 70 members** (Example: Puducherry) should meet for at least 50 days a year.
 - **Other Houses (Tamil Nadu), at least 90 days a year.**
- **The Presiding Officers Conference:**
 - **The Presiding Officers' conference**, held in Gandhinagar during January 2016, suggested:
 - State legislatures hold a **minimum of 60 days of sittings in a year**.
 - Between 2016 and 2021, **the PRS points out, 23 State Assemblies met for an average of 25 days.**

What are the Benefits of Increased House Sittings?

- **Healthy Discussion:**
 - Increased sitting in Houses (State or Parliament) would provide **more time to the members for discussion on the bills**, have a **healthy debate** by providing facts and arguments which would eventually lead to **healthy functioning of the house**.
- **Ease in Passing of Bills:**
 - As the number of sitting in a house increases, **more bills could be tabled** as passed in a particular session.
 - Increased number of bills passed on various spheres would enable the government to bring out **efficient and effective governance**.
- **Guillotine Closure:**
 - It is one when the **undiscussed clauses of a bill or a resolution** are also put to vote along with the discussed ones **due to wanting of time** (as the time allotted for the

discussion is over).

- Increased sittings would provide more time for the discussion and reduce the cases of **guillotine closure**.

▪ **Private Member Bills:**

- Only 14 **private member bills** out of thousands became laws since 1952.
- Increased sittings would **provide more time to the private members** to not only prepare and present the bill in the house, but also have a detailed and healthy discussion for its passage.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims

Q. When a bill is referred to a joint sitting of both the Houses of the Parliament, it has to be passed by: (2015)

- (a) a simple majority of members present and voting
- (b) three-fourths majority of members present and voting
- (c) two-thirds majority of the Houses
- (d) absolute majority of the Houses

Ans: (a)

Explanation:

- Article 108 of Indian Constitution deals with the joint sitting of both Houses of the Parliament. A joint sitting of Parliament is called by the President if a bill (ordinary) passed by one House has been rejected by the other, or both the Houses finally disagree on the amendments to be made in the bill, or if more than 6 months have passed without the receiving House taking any action on the bill.
- The joint sitting of Parliament is chaired by the Speaker of Lok Sabha and the bill is deemed to be passed with a simple majority of the members present and voting.
- Therefore, option (a) is the correct answer.

Mains

Q. The Indian Constitution has provisions for holding joint sessions of the two houses of the Parliament. Enumerate the occasions when this would normally happen and also the occasions when it cannot, with reasons thereof. (2017)

Source: TH