



Decline of Private Members' Bills in Indian Parliament

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Why in News?

In recent years, [Private Members' Bills](#), crucial for [Members of Parliament \(MPs\)](#) **independent expression**, have been sidelined in India's Parliament due to limited time allocation.

- The [17th Lok Sabha \(June 2019 to February 2024\)](#) saw a sharp decline in time spent on these bills, raising concerns about the **diminishing role of individual MPs** and the health of [parliamentary democracy](#).

What is the Private Members' Bill?

- **About:** Private Members' Bills are proposed by **MPs who are not Ministers** (i.e., not part of the government), allowing them to **introduce laws or amendments** on issues important to their constituencies.
- **Key Features:** Only **non-government MPs** can introduce these bills, offering a chance for **independent legislative proposals**.
 - MPs can also introduce resolutions to call attention to **specific matters**.
- **Procedure:**
 - **Drafting and Notice:** MPs draft and submit bills with at least **one month's notice**.
 - **Introduction:** Bills are introduced in Parliament, followed by initial discussions.
 - **Debate:** If selected, bills are debated, typically in limited **Friday afternoon sessions**.
 - **Decision:** Bills may be withdrawn or proceed to a vote.
- **Significance:** These bills provide a platform for MPs to express themselves without **party pressure**, often on crucial or controversial matters.
 - A historical example is the bill introduced by **H.V. Kamath in 1966** after the death of [Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri](#), seeking to **amend the Constitution** to make **only Lok Sabha members eligible for the post of Prime Minister**.
 - Only **14 Private Members' Bills** have been passed since independence, and **none have passed since 1970**.
 - The [Rights of Transgender Persons Bill, 2014](#), became the first private member's bill approved by the Rajya Sabha in 45 years but lapsed without reaching the Lok Sabha.

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Public Bill vs Private Bill

| Public Bill | Private Bill |
|--|--|
| 1. It is introduced in the Parliament by a minister. | 1. It is introduced by any member of Parliament other than a minister. |
| 2. It reflects of the policies of the government (ruling party). | 2. It reflects the stand of opposition party on public matter. |
| 3. It has greater chance to be approved by the Parliament. | 3. It has lesser chance to be approved by the Parliament. |
| 4. Its rejection by the House amounts to the expression of want of parliamentary confidence in the government and may lead to its resignation. | 4. Its rejection by the House has no implication on the parliamentary confidence in the government or its resignation. |
| 5. Its introduction in the House requires seven days' notice. | 5. Its introduction in the House requires one month's notice. |
| 6. It is drafted by the concerned department in consultation with the law department. | 6. Its drafting is the responsibility of the member concerned. |

Why is there a Decline in Private Members' Bills?

- **Lack of Time and Attention:** Data from PRS Legislative Research reveals that the 17th Lok Sabha allocated just **9.08 hours to Private Members' Bills**, while the **Rajya Sabha spent 27.01 hours**, a fraction of total session hours.
 - In the **18th Lok Sabha's two sessions**, only 0.15 hours were spent on such Bills in the Lower House and 0.62 hours in the Rajya Sabha, with minimal time on resolutions.
 - **Friday scheduling of Private Members' business** limits discussion as many MPs leave for constituencies, shrinking its window further.
 - The decline of these bills can be attributed to MPs' lack of seriousness, with many skipping discussions.
- **Revival of Private Members' Bills:** Shifting Private Members' Bills to **midweek** could boost participation and discussions.
 - Protect the **constitutional space for individual parliamentary expression** and encourage MPs to actively participate in their proposed bills.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims

Q With reference to the Parliament of India, consider the following statements: (2017)

1. A private member's bill is a bill presented by a Member of Parliament who is not elected but only nominated by the President of India.
2. Recently, a private member's bill has been passed in the Parliament of India for the first time in its history.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans: (d)

Exp:

- The process of law making begins with the introduction of a Bill in either House of the Parliament. A Bill can be introduced either by a Minister or a member other than a Minister. In the former case, it is called a Government Bill and in the latter case, it is known as a Private Member's Bill.
- In other words, a Private Member's Bill is introduced by any member (elected or nominated) of Parliament other than a minister. One month's notice period is required prior to its introduction. Its drafting is the sole responsibility of the member who introduces the bill. **Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**
- The first Private Member's Bill passed by parliament was the Muslim Wakfs Bill, 1952, which aimed at providing better governance and administration of Wakfs. It was passed in 1954. **Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**
- The **Rights of Transgender Persons Bill, 2014**, passed by the Rajya Sabha in 2015 became the first private member's bill to get the Rajya Sabha's approval in the last 45 years. **Therefore, option (d) is the correct answer.**

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