

53rd General Meeting of Society of Clerks at- the-Table,
Dhaka, Bangladesh
(4-8 November, 2017)

The Legislators and their representational role: Need for
uninterrupted functioning of Legislatures

The Primary role of a legislator, as the term implies, is of course to participate in the work of the legislature. If a legislator wants to play his role effectively for the betterment of the people and the country, he must make full use of all the available opportunities and participate actively in the legislative, financial and other business of the House, bringing to bear his special knowledge, experience and insights in the shaping of public policy and contribute his share in the oversight and scrutiny of the performance of the Government and redressal of public grievances. For effective discharge of their functions as representatives of the people, the knowledge of how Parliament or Legislatures go about their business is also required because certain parliamentary procedures have been evolved in the course of time which make the executive accountable, responsive and responsible to the representative bodies.

Parliament or Legislature is composed of individual legislators and the credibility of its image as a representative institution is intimately related to their role performance. In fact, the future of the democratic set-up itself depends largely upon the way, the legislators discharge their duties and responsibilities. The primary duty of a legislator is to represent his constituency and if he is to effectively serve the interests of his constituency he has to know his constituency. He is a link between the people whom he represents and the government, through the House of Legislature of which he is a member. Legislator has a duty to bring the attention of the Legislature towards the hopes and expectations and the grievances and even frustrations of his constituents, on the other hand, he has also to serve as a conduit of information about the various developments, particularly those relating to their betterment and welfare taking place in the Government and the Legislature.

Members have indeed many opportunities for making their contribution in the legislature through parliamentary procedures and devices like Question; Half-an-hour discussion; Adjournment motion; Call attention notice; Short duration discussion; raising of matters of public importance etc.

Legislators are looked upon as role models by their constituents and hence their behaviour is keenly observed by the

general masses. The disruption of proceedings in our Legislatures goes against the expected role of members which brings these 'temples of democracy' into public disrepute. The debates tend to become bitter on several occasion. If every Legislature follows the Rules of Procedure and healthy parliamentary conventions sincerely and in better spirit, there will hardly be any problem or disruption of the proceedings of the House and the Legislatures will become the cherished model democratic institutions.

Members, particularly, members of opposition parties, can utilize the Question Hour to ensure that the legislature secures the accountability of the executive. If some members, in order to take political mileage, disrupt the Question Hour, they miss a golden opportunity to serve as the true representatives of the people. When other opportunities are available to raise important issues, insistence by members on suspension of Question Hour and forcible disruption of Question Hour can at best be described as a case of missed opportunities.

Frequent disorderly scenes and disruptions result in huge loss of time and waste of public money. Besides, such frequent and defiant attempts to disrupt the normal business of the House undermine the faith of the people in the democratic set up. In the Presiding Officers Conference, 2015 held at Lucknow Hon'ble Speaker, Lok Sabha, Smt. Sumitra Mahajan pointed out

that the citizenry has become well informed and they are watching the proceedings of the House very keenly. She pointed out that NOTA has also found place in the ballot papers due to people's demand. It is thus very desirable that the proceedings of the House are carried out in an harmonious and cooperative manner. Further Hon'ble Speaker, Lok Sabha, Smt. Sumitra Mahajan stated that when the members get elected to any representative institution, they should come with a view to serve the people, irrespective of the fact that some of them may not have voted for them. The leaders of political parties and the members themselves ponder earnestly how to facilitate and ensure orderly debates, preserve the faith of the people in the parliamentary democratic set up and above all maintain the image and credibility of the representative bodies

As the time of the House is very precious, time available should be spent on meaningful and worthy debates. Of late, there has been a feeling in some quarters that over the years, the number of sittings as well as the time spent by the Legislatures in conducting various types of business have been decreasing.

House of the Parliament and the State Legislatures do not meet in session for a reasonably good period of time which in

turn deprives the Legislators of their legitimate right to seek information and call the executive to account.

In view of the increasing governmental activities and the increasing incidents of adjournments of the House due to noisy scenes and pandemonium, etc., it is imperative that the Parliament or Legislatures should meet for specified number of days so that the businesses before the House could be transacted effectively.

Often poor attendance in the House, especially during transaction of private members' business and non-participating attitude in the deliberations results in deserted chamber which undermines the seriousness of the debates, denudes the majesty of Legislature and seems to betray lack of faith of the members in the Legislature itself as an effective organ of the State. The chief whips of all political parties should make constant and concerted efforts to ensure good attendance of their party members in the House.

The televising of Parliamentary proceedings has helped in bringing the institution of Parliament nearer to the people and removing several misconceptions about its functioning. Constituents now have the opportunity for seeing for themselves the role being played by their elected representatives in ventilating their grievances.

It is the first time in Uttar Pradesh Legislative Assembly parliamentary history that the first session of the present 17th Assembly of Uttar Pradesh has been televised on Doordarshan. The present Government of Uttar Pradesh expressed its willingness to run longer session of the Assembly, so that members can take part in the raising questions in the House towards the difficulties and betterment of their constituencies.

It has not only enabled the people to comprehend the extent to which Parliament is a factor in shaping their destiny and through them, that of the nation, but has also contributed in further enhancing the credibility and confidence of the people in their elected representatives.

Parliament or Legislatures have played a pivotal role and it has always endeavoured to live up to the expectation of the people as a vehicle of social change and an effective institutions for redressal of the grievances of the people.

.....