

**Feedback on the Professional Development at the House of Commons,
Parliament of United Kingdom which I attended from 30th January to
9th February, 2012.**

I attended the Professional Development Programme at the House of Commons, Parliament of UK from 30th January to 9th February, 2012.

2. On the first day of the Programme, i.e. on the 30th January, 2012, I had to go through airport style security check-up at Portcullis House which is part of the Parliament Estate of U.K. Thereafter I was taken on tour of the Palace of Westminster. On the first day, Mr. Crispin Poyser, Clerk of the Overseas Office, House of Commons acquainted me with various aspects of the functioning of the House of Commons. Mr. Crispin informed that the House of Commons consists of more than 600-democratically elected Members of Parliament.

3. During the course of the Programme, a number of useful and interesting topics were discussed in a comprehensive fashion and the discussions were largely in the nature of interactive sessions. Some important topics discussed included the role of Select Committees and the Table Office of the House of Commons and the House of Lords; role of the Public Accounts Committee of the House of Commons; work of the Scrutiny Unit; Legislative Process in the House of Commons and House of Lords; proposed Parliamentary reforms in U.K; working of the Office of the Chief Executive of the House of Commons; role of Commonwealth Parliamentary Association; work of the Legal Service Office of the House of Commons; the role of the Internal Auditors; visits of Select Committees away from Parliament; implementation of recommendations of Parliamentary Committees; Human Resources and Development in the House of Commons; the work of the Facilities Department; System of Procurement in the House of Commons, work of the Vote Office including distribution of parliamentary papers and emergency production etc.

4. I was also taken to observe proceeding in the House of Commons, House of Lords and certain Select Committees. One full day was devoted to

the interactions with the Officers of the House of Lords and observing of proceedings therein. One interesting thing which I came to know about the House of Lords is that there is no limit on the total number of Members of the House of Lords. Another interesting feature of the House of Lords is that it is self-regulating and so, unlike the House of Commons' Speaker, the Lords Speaker does not call the House to order.

5. Select Committees appointed by the House of Commons deliberate in private and usually take evidence in public. Most of them do not have any executive powers but make reports to the House of Commons containing their opinions.

6. Nomination for the membership of Select Committees are generally put to the House by the Committee of Selection. The party composition of Select Committees reflects that of the House.

7. The range of Select Committees is considerable, covering the work of every government department, the European Union and cross-cutting issues such as human rights and the environment. They scrutinize the work of Government departments by a process of enquiry.

8. A key part of the framework for the accountability of Ministers and their departments to Parliament is provided by the Select Committees related to government department. Their formal terms of reference are "to examine the expenditure, administration and policy" of the relevant departments and of "associated public bodies".

9. Select Committees work very much on party basis and voting in the Committee is the same as in the House of Commons. Select Committees do not have Ministers on them. However, they usually take final evidence with Ministers and then present their Reports to the Parliament. No members of the shadow cabinet can be Member of a Select Committee.

10. The House of Commons also appoints general Committees, which can be divided into four categories:- those appointed to consider public

bills; those appointed to consider delegated legislation; those appointed to consider European documents recommended for debate by the European Scrutiny Committee; and the Scottish Welsh and Northern Ireland Grand Committees. They work in different way from Select Committees inasmuch as they are essentially “debating” rather than “investigatory” Committees. There is broadly one Commons Select Committee per Government department. All except the Northern Ireland Committee have 11 Members.

11. Committees in the House of Lords perform a very different function to their Commons counterparts with each Committee adopting a broad perspective based on a subject area rather than the activities of a particular Department. Their wide remits allow Lords Committees to investigate important issues thoroughly and with valuable flexibility. Lords Committees also benefit from the high level of specialist knowledge.

12. Speaker of the House of Commons: - When the Speaker of the House of Commons rises to speak all other Members including the Member who has the floor, must reserve their seats immediately. The Speaker may also order a Member who persists in irrelevance or tedious repetition to discontinue his or her speech and in case of grossly disorderly conduct may direct a Member to withdraw for the rest of the House. However, as point out in para 4 above, the Lords Speaker does not have the power to regulate the conduct Members of the House of Lords.

13. Joint Committees:- Joint Committees can be appointed by each House to undertake pre-legislative scrutiny of a particular draft bill or to consider other matters. (Joint Committees consists of Members of both the House of Commons and the House of Lords)

14. The Programme was very useful in the sense that it facilitated interchange of views and enriched my understanding of the working the Parliament of U.K. Ours is the largest democracy and theirs the oldest. It is, therefore, right that there should be fullest possible Parliamentary contact

and interchange of views between the two. Last but not the least, I did take a lot of wisdom from the words that were spoken to us.

15. On the basis of my discussion held with the Clerks of the House of Commons and my understanding of the working of Select Committee of the House of Commons and efficacy of their role, I would like to suggest that we should amend relevant rules governing the Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee to facilitate taking of oral evidences in public.

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