

REPORT

Study visit to the House of Commons,
Parliament of United Kingdom, London

FROM: 12th to 16th September, 2011

(BY J.G. NEGI)
DIRECTOR

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

On nomination made by the Secretary General, Rajya Sabha the under-mentioned officers attended the Professional Development Programme at the Houses of Commons and Lords, Parliament of United Kingdom from 12th to 16th September, 2011.

LAFEAS

1. Smt. Vandana Garg, Addl. Secretary
2. Sh. J.G. Negi, Director
3. Sh. K.P. Singh, Director
4. Sh. D.K. Mishra, Joint Director

Verbatim Reporting Service

1. Sh. T.M. Vijaya Kumar, Joint Director

PS&S Service

1. Smt. Usha Dhingra, Joint Director

1.2 During the course of study of the Parliament of United Kingdom the following outstanding topics were discussed for enriching experiences of the two democratic countries of the world. The topics taken for discussions during the period have been explained as under:

1.3 State Opening

The State Opening usually takes place in November or December on the first day of the new parliamentary session. There will also be a State Opening shortly after a general election. The Fixed Term Parliament Act was passed on 15 September 2011. This means that the next general election will be on 7 May 2015. A state opening will happen soon after this date. The sessions before and after the election can be shorter or longer than a normal session.

(i) State Opening is the main ceremonial event of the parliamentary calendar, attracting large crowds, both in person and watching on television and the internet. The Queen's procession from Buckingham Palace to Westminster is escorted by the Household Cavalry.

(ii) The Queen arrives at the Sovereign's Entrance at about 11.15am, and proceeds to the Robing Room, where she puts on the Imperial State Crown and parliamentary robe. A procession then leads through the Royal Gallery to the Chamber of the House of Lords, where the Queen takes the Throne.

(iii) The official known as 'Black Rod' is sent to summon the Commons. In a symbol of the Commons' independence, the door to their chamber is slammed in his face and not opened until he has knocked on the door with his staff of office. The Members of the House of Commons follow Black Rod and the Commons Speaker to the Lords Chamber and stand behind the Bar of the House of Lords (at the opposite end of the Chamber from the Throne) to hear the Queen's Speech.

1.4 Queen's Speech

The Queen's Speech is delivered by the Queen from the Throne in the House of Lords, in the presence of Members of both Houses. Although the Queen reads the Speech, the content is entirely drawn up by the Government and approved by the Cabinet. It contains an outline of the Government's policies and proposed new legislation for the new parliamentary session.

1.4(i) Debate on the Queen's Speech

Following the State Opening, a motion that the House sends a 'Humble Address' to the Queen thanking her for the Speech is introduced in both Houses. The Government's programme, as presented in the Queen's Speech, is then debated by both Houses for four or five days. The debate on the first day is a general one, with the following day's debates on particular subjects (such as health or foreign affairs). The Queen's Speech is voted on by the Commons, but no vote is taken in the Lords.

CHAPTER - II

2. Questions (ORAL)

Departments answer questions at regular intervals according to a rota (set by the Government) which is available from the Vote Office and Online Members' Centre. Each Member may table one substantive oral question for each Government department answering, subject to an overall maximum of two such questions to Ministers or other Members answering questions on a single day. In addition, Members may table one topical oral question to each department which answers such questions. Oral questions may be tabled on any sitting day (or non-sitting Friday) from immediately after the question time for a particular department until three days (excluding Fridays and weekends) before the next questions must reach the Table Office by 12.30 pm to be included in the random computer shuffle. Dates for the last days of tabling are shown on the order of questions rota and the pattern is as follows:

I

Tabled on a:	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
For answer on a:	Thursday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday

(i) Exceptions:

- (a) oral questions to the Secretaries of State for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and the Advocate General, if on the rota to answer questions, must be tabled at least five days (excluding Fridays and weekends) before the date for answer;
- (b) around recesses, when the Table Office issues a list of last tabling days under the Speaker's authority. (Last tabling days for question times immediately after the summer recess are near the end of the recess.)

(ii) After the cut-off at 12.30 pm on each last tabling day there is a random computer shuffle of the names of Members who have tabled oral questions to the department or departments concerned. Beyond a certain number for each department, questions are treated as 'lost' and are not printed; they are answered only if re-tabled by the tabling member specifically for written answer. The successful questions are printed in the blue pages of the vote bundle on the following day in the order in which they will be called.

(iii) The reason why most questions to the Prime Minister relate to his engagements for the day is that this enables Members to ask supplementary questions on any topical subject without notice. For engagements questions, 'E' on the question form is sufficient. Substantive questions to the Prime Minister may also be tabled. Other than for the Prime Minister, and for topical questions, the wording of oral questions must give an indication of the subject of the intended supplementary question.

2.1 Topical Orals

Topical oral questions usually occupy the last 15 minutes of question time. They are oral questions of which no formal notice of the substance of the question is given. In this respect they are similar to the 'E' question to the Prime Minister; and 'T' written on the question form is sufficient for tabling a topical question. Departments which answer topical questions are indicated on the order of questions rota.

2.2 Asking the question

In the House, when called, Members ask their question by standing up and stating the question number: 'Number (one), Mr. Speaker'. After the Minister answers, the Member is called to ask one supplementary question. Other Members may also be called to ask supplementaries to the same question. Supplementary oral questions must relate to the subject matter of the original question. Questions on the order paper not reached in the time available receive a written answer.

(i) Questions are sometimes grouped, and may therefore be taken out of numerical order. A Member whose question has been grouped and is not the lead question is called to ask a supplementary immediately after the Minister's answer to the supplementary from the lead questioner. Any grouping is indicated on the annunciators before the House sits. A Member may not ask more than one question of each department in each question time (excluding topical questions). Therefore, a Member with a question on the order paper who is called to ask a supplementary to an earlier question will not be called to ask his or her own question later on.

(ii) At Prime Minister's questions, Members with engagements questions (other than the first) are called only to ask a supplementary question. Similarly, during topical questions, Members with such questions (other than the first) are called only to ask their supplementary questions.

(iii) If unable to attend question time, Members should 'unstar' their question (convert it to written instead of oral answer) or withdraw it by informing the Table Office. A withdrawal or unstarred may be communicated to the office by any means, including by Members' staff (but then it must be followed by faxed authorisation).

2.3 Ordinary written questions

Unless the answer is required on a specific date, questions for written reply are set down for answer two sitting days after they are received. An answer is not required to be given on this date, but the Government cannot answer before this date to allow for processing (including editorial corrections and transfers of questions between departments, if necessary). This is the default position, and Members may leave the date for answer blank for ordinary written questions. There is no limit on the number of orderly ordinary written questions a member may table.

(i) Questions for answer on a named (specific) day

Members may table up to five 'named day' questions on a single day. These are questions for which the Member has requested a written answer on a specific day. The minimum period of notice is three sitting days (including non-sitting Fridays) and the pattern for minimum notice is therefore as follows:

Tabled on a:	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
For answer on a:	Thursday	Friday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday

(ii) By convention, Government departments aim to answer parliamentary questions within a working week of tabling. Answers are formally made to the House. They are sent directly to the Member who asked the question by the relevant department but must also be made available in the Library and delivered to Hansard for publication on the following sitting day. Answers continue to be given during recesses (provided the date for answer has passed), and special editions of Hansard containing answers are published during the summer recess.

2.4 Notices

(i) Notices of oral and written questions can be given only in written form. Printed question forms are available from the Table Office (and can be overprinted on request with the Member's name and constituency), and an electronic template can also be provided, but questions may be tabled in any legible form. Relevant interests must be declared. Questions may be handed in at the Table Office by Members or persons acting on their authority, sent by post or tabled electronically. Members' staff may enter the Table Office, although priority is given to Members at all times. Questions may be left in a box outside the office. Unless handed in by a Member in person or tabled electronically, questions must bear the signature of a Member, but a member may sign or hand in a question on behalf of another. Faxed, stamped or photocopied signatures cannot be accepted.

(ii) In order to table questions electronically, a Member must sign the necessary authority in the Table Office. Questions may be sent electronically only from computers provided by the House, via the intranet and using the Member's Parliamentary Network login ID and password.

(iii) Questions may be tabled in the Lower Table Office from 10 am on Mondays, 9.30 am on Tuesdays and Wednesdays and 9am on Thursdays and (sitting) Fridays until the rising of the House; and from 11am to 3pm on non-sitting Fridays. Notices of questions handed in after half an hour after the moment of interruption (10.30pm on Monday or Tuesday, 7.30 pm on Wednesday, 6.30 pm on Thursday or 3 pm on Friday) are treated as if they had been handed in on the next tabling day.

(iv) Questions may be sent through the post at any time. If received on a non-tabling day they are treated as if tabled on the next tabling day.

(v) During the summer recess provision is made in September for Members to table five named day questions on each of three tabling days and for answers to be provided and published on one of three answering days. Details of the arrangements made appear on the order paper, and are available from the table office, before the Houses rises for the summer recess.

(vi) Questions are published on the blue pages of the vote bundle on the day after they are tabled, indicating they are provisional, and Members may check these for accuracy, informing the Table Office clerks as soon as possible of any errors. After editorial corrections and any transfers between departments, they are published the following day in the Question Book (also known as 'the whites').

(vii) When tabling questions, relevant interests should be declared. Questions are put to the senior Commons Minister of a Government department and not individual Ministers of that department. Departments may transfer questions to each other, in which case the Member is informed. The transfer of written questions generally has little significance but it is important in the case of an oral question because this will mean loss of the opportunity to put the question in the Chamber. An answer to a question from a Minister of a department other than the question was directed (a question which could have been transferred but was not) will start with the sentence 'I have been asked to reply'.

(viii) Oral and written questions may also be tabled to the House of Commons Commission, the Church Commissioners, the Public Accounts Commission and the Speaker's Committee on the Electoral Commission (answered by Members with responsibility for representing those bodies). Questions are sub-edited by the Clerks in the Table Office, under the authority of the Speaker, with the aim of applying the rules of the House, as well as 'House' style. Questions must be expressed in neutral terms and parliamentary language and should be as clear and precise as possible to allow effective answers. The Clerks in the Table Office can advise on the form and content of questions, and assist in reflecting a Member's wishes as effectively as possible within the rules.

CHAPTER - III

3. Members' Interests

(i) Members have two distinct but overlapping obligations in relation to the disclosure of interests. They are required to register certain interests within specified periods, and also to declare relevant interests (including those which are registered) in the course of parliamentary proceedings and in some other circumstances.

(ii) The rules on these duties are complex and it is essential that every member has a copy of the most up-to-date versions of both the Code of Conduct and the Guide to the Rules relating to the conduct of Members.

3.1 Advice and guidance

(i) The Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards has overall responsibility for: the maintenance of the Register of Members' Financial Interests and other registers of interests; advice to Members and others on the registration of interests (assisted by the Registrar of Members' Financial Interests); advice to the Committee on Standards and Privileges on the operation and interpretation of the Code of Conduct and related matters; and the investigation of complaints against Members in respect of the registration or declaration of interests and other aspects of the propriety of their conduct.

(ii) The Committee on Standards and Privileges is responsible for oversight of the Commissioner's work in all these areas, as well as for considering reports from the Commissioner on complaints against Members.

3.2 Registration of interests

New Members will receive a registration form from the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards which they are required to complete and return within one month of taking their seats. Subsequent changes to registrable interests must be notified to the Commissioner within four weeks of each change occurring.

3.3 Declaration of interests

(i) Key points in respect of the declaring of interests are:

(a) The rule relating to declarations of interest is more wide-ranging than that for registration: it covers not just direct and current interests but indirect interests, past interests and expected future interests.

(b) Interests must be declared not just when speaking but when giving written notices, including questions and early day motions (EDMs), and when adding names to EDMs and other motions. In these circumstances an '[R]' will be included against the Member's name when it appears on the order paper or notice paper.

- (c) Interests must be declared when requesting adjournment debates or emergency debates from the Speaker.
- (d) The requirement to declare interests extends to correspondence and meetings with Ministers, public officials and other Members.
- (e) When declaring an interest that is not yet registered, or not required to be registered, in relation to a written notice, a description of the interest should be given to the relevant office.
- (f) Registering an interest does not remove the need to declare it when appropriate.
- (g) Registration of an interest is sufficient for a Member to vote without any further declaration, even if the Register has not yet been published. If a Member votes without having first registered a relevant interest, that interest should be registered as soon as possible after the vote.
- (h) Members should note relevant interests when booking catering facilities.

(ii) Paid advocacy is prohibited. Members must not engage in any parliamentary proceeding or, in a parliamentary context, seek to influence others in such a way as to benefit exclusively a body outside parliament in which they have a pecuniary interest. Further details on how and when the prohibition on paid advocacy applies are discussed in the Guide to the Rules. In all cases of doubt Members are advised to consult the Registrar of Members' Financial Interests and/ or the Parliamentary Commissioner for Standards.

3.4 Register of Lords' Interests

The Code of Conduct requires Members of the Lords to register financial interests that might reasonably be thought to influence their parliamentary actions.

3.5 Making a complaint

To make a complaint about the conduct of a Member of the Lords write to the Lords Commissioner for Standards.

CHAPTER –IV

4. Bill

(i) A Bill is a proposal for a new law, or a proposal to change an existing law that is presented for debate before Parliament. Bills are introduced in either the House of Commons or House of Lords for examination, discussion and amendment. When both Houses have agreed on the content of a Bill it is then presented to the reigning monarch for approval (known as Royal Assent). Once Royal Assent is given a Bill becomes an Act of Parliament and is law.

(ii) Different types of Bills can be introduced by:

- The government
- Individual MPs or Lords
- Private individuals or organisations

There are three different types of Bill: Public, Private and Hybrid Bills. There is also another kind of Public Bill called Private Members' Bills.

4.1 First Reading

The long title (indicating the content of the Bill) is read out by the Member of the Lords in charge of the Bill. Once formally introduced, the Bill is printed. The next stage is second reading - the first opportunity for Members of the Lords to debate the main principles and purpose of the Bill.

Debate on general principles of the Bill

Second reading is the first opportunity for MPs to debate the main principles of the Bill. It usually takes place no sooner than two weekends after first reading.

4.2 Second Reading

The Government minister, spokesperson or MP responsible for the Bill opens the second reading debate. The official Opposition spokesperson responds with their views on the Bill. The debate continues with other Opposition parties and backbench MPs giving their opinions. At the end of the debate, the Commons decides whether the Bill should be given its second reading by voting, meaning it can proceed to the next stage. It is possible for a Bill to have a second reading with no debate - as long as MPs agree to its progress. Once second reading is complete the Bill proceeds to committee stage - where each clause (part) and any amendments (proposals for change) to the Bill may be debated.

Line by line examination of the Bill

Detailed line by line examination of the separate parts (clauses and schedules) of the Bill takes place during committee stage. Any Member of the Lords can take part. Committee stage can last for one or two days to eight or more. It usually starts no fewer than two weeks after the second reading. The day before committee stage starts, amendments are published in a Marshalled List – in which all the amendments are placed in order. Amendments on related subjects are grouped together and a list (“groupings of amendments”) is published on the day.

4.3 Committee stage

Every clause of the Bill has to be agreed to and votes on the amendments can take place. All proposed amendments (proposals for change) can be discussed and there is no time limit – or guillotine - on discussion of amendments. If the Bill has been amended it is reprinted with all the agreed amendments. At the end of committee stage, the Bill moves to report stage for further examination.

Chance for the whole House to discuss and amend the Bill

Report stage gives MPs an opportunity, on the floor of the House, to consider further amendments (proposals for change) to a Bill which has been examined in committee. There is no set time period between the end of committee stage and the start of the report stage.

4.4 Report stage

All MPs may speak and vote - for lengthy or complex Bills the debates may be spread over several days. All MPs can suggest amendments to the Bill or new clauses (parts) they think should be added.

Report stage is usually followed immediately by debate on the Bill's third reading. Third reading is the final chance for the Commons to debate the contents of a Bill. It usually takes place immediately after report stage as the next item of business on the same day.

- Committee stage (Commons)
- Third reading (Commons)

4.5 Third Reading

Debate on the Bill is usually short, and limited to what is actually in the Bill, rather than, as at second reading, what might have been included. Amendments (proposals for change) cannot be made to a Bill at third reading in the Commons. At the end of the debate, the House decides (votes on) whether to approve the third reading of the Bill.

If the Bill started in the Commons it goes to the House of Lords for its first reading. If the Bill started in the Lords it returns to the House of Lords for consideration of any amendments the Commons has made.

- Report stage (Commons)
- Consideration of

4.6 Each House considers the other's amendments

When a Bill has passed through third reading in both Houses it is returned to the first House (where it started) for the second House's amendments (proposals for change) to be considered. Both Houses must agree on the exact wording of the Bill. There is no set time period between the third reading of a Bill and consideration of any Commons or Lords amendments.

4.7 'Ping Pong'

If the Commons makes amendments to the Bill, the Lords must consider them and either agree or disagree to the amendments or make alternative proposals. If the Lords disagrees with any Commons amendments, or makes alternative proposals, then the Bill is sent back to the Commons. A Bill may go back and forth between each House ('Ping Pong') until both Houses reach agreement.

Once the Commons and Lords agree on the final version of the Bill, it can receive Royal Assent and become an Act of Parliament (the proposals of the Bill now become law).

In exceptional cases, when the two Houses do not reach agreement, the Bill falls. If certain conditions are met, the Commons can use the Parliament Acts to pass the Bill, without the consent of the Lords, in the following session.

When a Bill has completed all its parliamentary stages in both Houses, it must have Royal Assent before it can become an Act of Parliament (law).

Royal Assent is the Monarch's agreement to make the Bill into an Act and is a formality.

There is no set time period between the consideration of amendments to the Bill and Royal Assent – it can even be a matter of minutes after Ping Pong is complete.

4.8 Royal Assent

When Royal Assent has been given to a Bill, the announcement is usually made in both Houses - at a suitable break in each House's proceedings – by the Lord Speaker in the Lords and the Speaker in the Commons. At prorogation (the formal end to a parliamentary year), Black Rod interrupts the proceedings of the Commons and summons MPs to the Lords Chamber to hear the Lords Commissioners announce Royal Assent for each Bill.

4.9 After Royal Assent

The legislation within the Bill may commence immediately, after a set period or only after a commencement order by a Government minister. A commencement order is designed to bring into force the whole or part of an Act of Parliament at a date later than the date of the Royal Assent. If there is no commencement order, the Act will come into force from midnight at the start of the day of the Royal Assent. The practical implementation of an Act is the responsibility of the appropriate government department, not Parliament. Delegated or secondary legislation is usually concerned with detailed changes to the law made under powers from an existing Act of Parliament. Statutory instruments form the majority of delegated legislation but it can also include Rules or Codes of Practice.

CHAPTER - V

5. Specialist committees have been set up to help Parliament check secondary legislation.

- Joint Committee on Statutory Instruments
- Regulatory Reform Committee (Commons)
- Delegated Powers and Regulatory Reform Committee (Lords)
- Merits of Statutory Instruments Committee (Lords)

Much of the work of the House of Commons and the House of Lords takes place in committees, made up of around 10 to 50 MPs or Lords. These committees examine issues in detail, from government policy and proposed new laws, to wider topics like the economy.

5.1 Select Committees

Select Committees work in both Houses. They check and report on areas ranging from the work of government departments to economic affairs.

5.2 Joint Committees

Joint Committees are committees consisting of MPs and Lords.

5.3 General Committees (including Public Bill Committees)

These committees are unique to the Commons and mainly look at proposed legislation in detail. They include all committees formerly known as Standing Committees. The House of Commons has three Grand Committees

5.4 Grand Committees

The Commons has three Grand Committees which look at questions on Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Grand Committees in the Lords debate Bills outside the Lords Chamber

Select Committees work in both Houses. They check and report on areas ranging from the work of government departments to economic affairs. The results of these inquiries are public and many require a response from the government.

Differences between the two Houses

House of Commons Select Committees are largely concerned with examining the work of government departments. Committees in the House of Lords concentrate on four main areas: Europe, science, economics, and the UK constitution.

5.5 Commons Select Committees

There is a Commons Select Committee for each government department, examining three aspects: spending, policies and administration.

These departmental committees have a minimum of 11 members, who decide upon the line of inquiry and then gather written and oral evidence. Findings are reported to the Commons, printed, and published on the Parliament website. The government then usually has 60 days to reply to the committee's recommendations.

Some Select Committees have a role that crosses departmental boundaries such as the Public Accounts or Environmental Audit Committees. Depending on the issue under consideration they can look at any or all of the government departments.

Other Commons Committees are involved in a range of on-going investigations, like administration of the House itself or allegations about the conduct of individual MPs.

Following the adoption by the House of recommendations from the Reform of the House of Commons Committee (which was chaired by the former MP, Dr Tony Wright);

- the majority of Select Committee Chairs are now elected by their fellow MPs. This applies to departmental committees and the Environmental Audit, Political and Constitutional Reform, Procedure, Public Administration and Public Accounts committees.
- a Backbench Business Committee has been established with the ability to schedule business in the Commons Chamber and in Westminster Hall on days, or parts of days, set aside for non-government business.

5.6 Lords Select Committees

Lords Select Committees do not shadow the work of government departments. Their investigations look into specialist subjects, taking advantage of the Lords' expertise and the greater amount of time (compared to MPs) available to them to examine issues.

There are currently five major Lords Select Committees:

- the European Union Committee
- the Science and Technology Committee
- the Communications Committee
- the Constitution Committee
- the Economic Affairs Committee

These five committees are re-appointed at the beginning of a new session. Each one runs inquiries and reports on issues within their specific areas. Occasionally, other committees are set up to look at issues outside of the five main groups

Joint Committees are committees consisting of MPs and Lords. They have similar powers to Select Committees. Some are set up on a permanent basis, like the Joint Committee on Human Rights. Other appointments are for specific purposes, such as examining draft proposals for Bills on subjects ranging from gambling to stem cell research.

In Joint Committees, Members from both Houses meet and work as one committee, and appoint a single chairman who can be an MP or Lord.

Joint Committees operate like Select Committees. They may conduct an ongoing examination of a particular area (such as human rights) or of a specific matter, such as Draft Bills or House of Lords reform. Reports are available to the public in printed and online formats.

5.7 Major Joint Committees

Two Joint Committees meet on a regular basis: Human Rights, which meets to consider human rights issues in the UK; and Statutory Instruments, which meets to scrutinise delegated legislation.

5.8 Other Joint Committees

Committees such as those on Consolidation Bills and Tax Law Rewrite Bills meet as Bills are referred to them. Joint Committees on specific topics, like those set up to consider draft Bills and other issues, stop meeting once they have fully reported

The main role of General Committees is to consider proposed legislation in detail. This committee system allows faster processing of Bills and is unique to the House of Commons; the Lords meet as a whole House in this function. The committees reflect the political makeup of the House. The government always has a majority.

5.9 Committees on Bills

A Public or Private Bill Committee is appointed for each Bill that goes through Parliament. Depending on its complexity, the consideration of a Bill can take a few minutes to a few months.

The Lords meet as a whole House in this function (in the debating chamber) or as a Grand Committee away from the chamber. Proceedings in a Grand Committees are the same as Committees of the whole House with an important exception: motions must be passed unanimously, so a dissenting voice from one Member could block an amendment to a Bill.

5.10 Naming Public Bill Committees

Each Public Bill Committee is named after the Bill it considers. For example, a committee considering a Bill titled the Climate Bill would be called the Climate Bill Committee.

Each committee is assigned a chairman and debate Bills as they would do in the Commons chamber, with broadly the same rules of debate applying. Public Bill Committees, unlike the Standing Committees they replace, have the power to take written and oral evidence from officials and experts outside of Parliament. This is intended to give Committee members more information on which to make their decisions.

The minimum number of Members in a committee is 16 and the maximum is about 50. The proportion of Members in a Public Bill Committee mirrors the political parties' strengths in the Commons, so there is always a government majority.

5.11 Reports

Public Bill Committees examine each Bill line by line. Once a committee has finished looking at a Bill, it reports its conclusions and any amendments made to the Commons, where Members debate the Bill further.

The Bill is printed again with the amendments made by the Public Bill Committee; this is publicly available in printed and online formats.

Although the Lords do not meet in Public Bill Committees, they have a report stage to allow further consideration of Bills.

5.12 Other General Committees

Additional General Committees exist to debate matters in specific areas, such as the Scottish Grand Committee, the Welsh Grand Committee, the Northern Ireland Grand Committee

Grand Committees give MPs the opportunity to debate issues affecting their region. The Committees function in a similar way to the Commons Chamber, with ministerial statements and an opportunity to question the Ministers. Every MP representing a constituency in the region is entitled to attend Grand Committee meetings.

a. Welsh Grand Committee

The Welsh Grand Committee consists of the 40 Welsh MPs, and currently up to 5 others. It debates issues relevant to Wales, such as the effects on Wales of the Government's programme announced in the Queen's Speech.

b. Scottish Grand Committee

The Scottish Grand Committee includes all 72 Scottish MPs. It may meet anywhere in Scotland as well as Westminster. Traditionally it considered the principles of Scottish Bills which were referred to it at second reading. However, UK Parliament Bills relating only to Scotland are rare since the establishment of the Scottish Parliament. It also takes questions and statements and debates other matters concerning Scotland. However, there have been no meetings of the Committee in the last few years.

c. Northern Ireland Grand Committee

The Northern Ireland Grand Committee includes each of the 18 MPs in Northern Ireland, together with up to 25 other MPs. It debates matters relating specifically to Northern Ireland.

5.13 Grand Committees: House of Lords

Most Bills which are not committed to a Committee of the Whole House in the Lords are instead sent to a Grand Committee. The proceedings are identical to those in a Committee of the Whole House except that voting is not allowed. This means that all decisions must be made unanimously. Any Member of the House of Lords may attend a Grand Committee.

a. Regional Grand Committees

Regional Grand Committees were established in November 2008 but Standing Orders that set up these committees expired in April 2010. Regions of the UK that were covered by a Regional Grand Committee included:

- East Midlands
- East of England
- North East
- North West
- South East
- South West
- West Midlands
- Yorkshire and the Humber

Two events have changed the way Members of the House of Lords are appointed: the 1999 House of Lords Act, which ended hereditary Peers' right to pass membership down through family, and the introduction of the House of Lords Appointments Commission. There are now a number of routes to becoming a Member of the House of Lords.

CHAPTER – VI

6 Members' allowances and expenses

Most Members of the House of Lords do not receive a salary for their parliamentary duties and are eligible to receive allowances and, within certain limits,

6.1 Daily allowance

Members of the House of Lords, who are not paid a salary, may claim a daily allowance of £300 (or may elect to claim a reduced daily allowance of £150) per sitting day - but only if they attend a sitting of the House and/or committee proceedings. Members of the Lords do not pay tax on their allowances.

6.2 Members of the Lords who receive a salary

Some Members of the Lords receive a salary because of the offices they hold.

- The Lord Speaker, the Chairman of Committees, and the Principal Deputy Chairman - paid from the House of Lords budget.
- Government ministers - paid by the relevant Government departments.

Members who receive a salary are not entitled to claim the additional allowances based on attendance.

6.3 Financial assistance for Opposition parties

A scheme for providing financial assistance to the Opposition and second largest opposition party in the House of Lords to assist them in carrying out their parliamentary business was introduced in October 1996. Known as 'Cranborne Money', the scheme was extended to cover the Convenor of the Crossbench Peers in October 1999.

The rates payable for the 2010/11 financial year are as follows:

- £5,695 for the Conservatives from 1 April – 11 May 2010
- £7,808 for the Liberal Democrats from 1 April – 11 May 2010
- £440,129 for Labour from 12 May 2010 – 31 March 2011

- £63,687 for the office of the Convenor of the Crossbench Peers from 1 April 2010 – 31 March 2011.

Under the scheme, the parties and Convenor are responsible for ensuring that the expenses claimed are incurred exclusively in relation to their parliamentary business. At the end of each financial year they provide a certificate from an independent professional auditor to confirm this.

There is only one opposition party in the Parliament following the general election in April 2010.

CHAPTER - VII

7. Westminster Hall debates

Some debates take place in the Grand Committee Room, referred to as Westminster Hall. These debates were inaugurated in 1999 in a specially converted room off the main hall. The room is arranged in an elongated horse-shoe shape rather than the opposing benches of the Commons Chamber. This is to reflect the non-partisan nature of the debates in Westminster Hall.

Westminster Hall adjournment debates allow MPs to discuss issues of local or personal interest which rarely have time to be debated in the main Chamber of the House of Commons. MPs can discuss a variety of issues and receive a response from a government Minister.

There are also regular opportunities for Committee reports to be debated in Westminster Hall usually on Thursday afternoon.

CHAPTER – VIII

8. Chancellor of the Exchequer makes a major speech to the House of Commons on the state of the national finances and the Government's proposals for changes to taxation. This statement is known as the Budget.

8.1 The Budget usually takes place in March or April. There has to be a Budget every year because some taxes, such as income tax and corporation tax, are annual taxes (not permanent), so they must be renewed each year. In election years, after a change of Government, a Budget will usually be introduced by the incoming Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether or not the outgoing Chancellor has already delivered one.

8.2 The Budget speech usually includes:

- a review of how the UK economy is performing
- forecasts of how the UK economy will perform in the future
- details of any changes to taxation.

The Chancellor's statement is followed by several days' debate.

8.3 Tax measures announced in the Budget, known as the Budget Resolutions, can be approved by the House of Commons to come into effect in law immediately. But the decisions to agree the resolutions themselves, are taken at the end of the debate on the Budget.

8.4 The Finance Bill is the Bill presented to Parliament each year which enacts the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Budget proposals for taxation.

Once the House of Commons has agreed the Budget Resolutions, the Bill starts its passage through Parliament in the same way as any other Bill.

The House of Lords has a very limited role in respect of Finance Bills. Many Finance Bills are classed as Money Bills, which the Lords may not reject and can only delay for a month. Since 1997, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has presented an annual pre-Budget report. This usually takes place in November/December. The pre-Budget report speech to the House of Commons usually includes:

- a report of progress since the previous Budget
- an update on the state of the UK economy
- details of any proposed changes to taxation

8.5 Financial procedures

The **Budget statement** includes a summary of the main tax and spending proposals, and is usually followed by four days of debate, ending with votes on tax resolutions. Tax changes, but not new taxes, may come into effect immediately and be validated by a single motion taken after the Budget speech; they need to be confirmed by individual resolutions within 10 sitting days. Papers published at the time of the budget include the 'Financial Statement and Budget Report' ('the red book').

The **Finance Bill** is brought in to give permanent effect to the resolutions, which are time-limited. Procedure is as for any public bill, but the bill is usually split for committee stage: a selection of the more controversial, important or novel clauses is considered in Committee of the whole House; the remainder of the bill is considered in public bill committee. Proceedings on the Finance Bill on the floor of the House are 'exempted business', and so may continue until any hour.

Each Government department publishes detailed expenditure plans for the ensuing three years usually in June (forming part of each department's annual report).

8.6 The **main Supply estimates** are published by each department in about April. There are also supplementary estimates (usually twice a year) and a 'vote on account' in December to authorise a provisional allocation of funds for the forthcoming financial year. There may also be 'excess votes' after the financial year ends. All public spending must be approved by Parliament and the questions on estimates are put formally, without debate.

8.7 **Consolidated fund bills** give legislative force to the estimates and vote on account. There are usually three such bills each year, of which two are appropriation bills which allocate the sums granted to particular purposes. Questions on these bills are put forthwith, without debate.

8.8 **Money, and ways and means**, resolutions are passed to give explicit approval to new types of expenditure or taxation or other charges in bills before the House. Such motions are usually debated with the second reading of the bill (but may be voted on separately). If considered separately from the bill to which they relate, debate may last up to 45 minutes.

8.9 **Estimates days.** Three sitting days (Estimates days) are set aside each year formally for debate and approval of the content of the estimates presented by the Government to Parliament for approval. In practice, Estimates days are used for debating select committee reports chosen by the Liaison Committee.

8.10 Money is voted only on the initiative of the Government. Thus the Commons could reduce estimates but not increase them; the Finance Bill is not amended by the House of Lords. Most of the estimates are agreed to without amendment or debate.

CHAPTER –IX

OBSERVATION

- 9.1** During the course of studying the United Kingdom parliamentary system, it is felt that some of the practices adopted by them are worth highlighting.
- 9.2** The Westminster Hall debates allow MPs to discuss issues of local or personal interest which rarely have time to be discussed in the main Chamber of the House of Commons. The importance given to these debates are that MPs discuss a variety of issues and receive a response from a government Minister. India should also adopt by introducing such an innovative system in the Indian Parliamentary system in order that MPs who do not get time to speak in the House may get redressal of their grievances by debating the burning issues of the nation in such institution.
- 9.3** Unlike Upper House of the Indian parliamentary system the Members of the House of Lords who are not paid salary, claim a daily allowance per sitting day – but only if they attend a sitting of the House and / or Committee proceedings.
- 9.4** In the United Kingdom parliament, the business calendar of the parliament is drawn up before hand for the whole year and the schedule business papers are published in advance. In case of any changes in the stipulated schedule business the notification is issued to effect the changes made subsequently in the business. The Indian Parliament should also follow the same pattern as prevailing in United Kingdom Parliament.
