

PREFACE

I was nominated by the Rajya Sabha Secretariat to the "Training Programme on Parliamentary Administration" from 01st November to 12 November 2010 at Royal Institute of Public Administration (RIPA) International, London, alongwith five other officers drawn from various Services of the Rajya Sabha Secretariat. The group of Officers led by Smt. Kusum Sudhir, Joint Director left for London, U.K. on October 31, 2010. The Protocol Officer of London based High Commission of India, received the group of officers at the Airport and arranged for cabs to take the group to Bedford Hotel at Russel Square, London where we were to stay during the full period of the Training Programme.

The Training Programme was aimed at giving us over-all view to the functioning of the British Parliament. Some distinguished and experienced persons working in different fields, departments, services of the Westminster Parliament delivered lectures on the subjects concerning the British Constitution, Administration, Legislative procedure of Parliament, Role of the Speaker and the Lord Chancellor, the Executive, the Select / Standing Committees, Financial Control and Audit System.

We got an opportunity to visit the U.K. Parliament and witness live proceedings of the House of Commons besides that of visiting the Headquarters of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association. We also had an opportunity to see the beautiful city of London, its historical places, buildings, monuments, museum and its lively people from very close quarters.

The Report

The main objectives of the training programme were to make understand:-

- The internal organization and day-to-day running of the two houses-recent organizational reform
- The Government's Interface with Parliament

- The role and work of the Commons Office of the Chief Executive and the internal audit
- Reporting the proceedings: the Official Report (Hansard) in the 21st Century
- The role of the legislature and legislative processes, from the first reading to Royal Assent
- The work of the Table Office in the House of Commons
- The Select Committee System in the House of Commons
- The latest developments in financial and budgetary control-how parliament seeks to achieve value for money
- Information services and the work of the Library Services in the House of Commons
- Printing and distributing Parliamentary papers
- The House of Lords, its work and its future reform
- Televising Parliament and relations with the media

THE PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

The British Parliament is the oldest Parliament of the World and the mother of other Parliaments around the globe. Parliament, Britain's legislature is made up of the House of Commons, the House of Lords and the Queen in her constitutional role. The present day, Parliament of the Great Britain comprises of elected Members from England, North Ireland, Scotland and the Wales.

The Commons has 651 elected Members of Parliament (MPs), who represent local constituencies. The House of Lords is made up of 1,185 hereditary and life peers and peeresses, and the two archbishops and the 24 most senior bishops of the established Church of England.

Both the Houses have separate sittings and it is more the conventions than the law, which governs the relationship between the two. The Members of the House of Commons are elected for a period of 5 years by means of general elections. The election procedure in relation to the Members of the House of Lords is quite a different one. There are certain categories of Lords elected / nominated for different periods of time.

The centre of parliamentary power is the House of Commons. Limitations on the power of the Lords (it rarely uses its power to delay passage of most laws for a year) is based on the principle that the Lords, as a revising chamber,

should complement the Commons and not rival it. Once passed through both Houses, legislation requires the Royal Assent to become law.

Parliament has a number of ways to exert control over the executive branch. Parliamentary committees question ministers and civil servants before preparing reports on matters of public policy and issues can be debated before decisions are reached. However, ultimate power rests in the ability of the House of Commons to force the government to resign by passing a resolution of 'no confidence'. The Government must also resign if the House rejects a proposal so vital to its policy that it has made it a matter of confidence. The proceedings of both Houses of Parliament are broadcast on television and radio, sometimes live or more usually in recorded and edited form.

Each Parliamentary Session, lasting for almost whole of the year, is marked by a grand ceremony of State Opening by the Sovereign i.e. the Queen. This practice is being observed for the last 500 years or so. This serves as a kind of a symbolic reminder of the unity and oneness of the three integral constituents of the British Parliament i.e. the Sovereign (Queen), the House of Lords and the House of Commons. It is the prerogative of the Monarch alone to summon the Parliament for transaction of the Business. The event is marked by great pomp and show. The Union Jack is hoisted at the Victoria Towers when the Queen leaves the Parliament after having delivered her speech. The flag denotes that the Parliament is in Session. Thereafter, each House meets separately to begin debating the contents of the Speech and in this way a new session is under way.

VISIT TO THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT

A guided tour through the Palace of Westminster and the Houses of Parliament was arranged by RIPA. All the participants visited the Parliament with the Director of Studies, Mr. Ian Church. We were taken around the building and explained the historical importance of each and every part of it.

Different items of furniture and other furnishings have been contributed by Commonwealth Countries for the Chamber of the House of Lords. India and

Pakistan have given two identical ornamental doors. The door facing the seat of Lord Chancellor has been given by India and the door at the back of the seat has been given by Pakistan.

The Chambers of both the Houses are moderately sized. No specific seats are allotted to Members. Every day, both the Speaker of House of Commons and the Lord Chancellor of the House of Lords move in a formal procession to attend their respective Houses.

VISIT TO THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY ASSOCIATION

We visited the Headquarters of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association alongwith the Course Director, Mr. Ian Church. We met with the Hon'ble Secretary-General Dr. William F. Shija and other senior officials of the Association. The Hon'ble Secretary-General gave a lecture on the objectives of the Association and other miscellaneous topics.

The Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) consists of the national, provincial, state and territorial Parliaments and Legislatures of the countries of the Commonwealth. The Association's mission is to promote the advancement of parliamentary democracy by enhancing knowledge and understanding of democratic governance. It seeks to build an informed parliamentary community able to deepen the Commonwealth's dewwmocratic commitment and to further co-operation among its parliaments and legislatures. The mission is achieved through a strategic plan which ensures CPA activities continue to meet the changing needs to today's parliamentarians.

REPORTING, EDITING AND PUBLICATION OF THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

'Hansard' is the official name given to the verbatim recording of the proceedings of both the Houses of the British Parliament. In fact, it is quite

interesting that 'Hansard' is the name of the family which was given contract to publish Parliamentary Debates in the 18th Century.

The official Report is a full report being defined as one which, though not strictly verbatim, is substantially the verbatim report with repetitions and redundancies omitted and with obvious mistakes corrected but which on the other hand leaves out nothing that adds to the meaning of the speech or illustrates the argument.

The Report covers (i) proceedings of the Houses and (ii) Select/Standing Committees. All the proceedings are recorded by Reporters and given to Transcribers for typing. Thereafter, all the typed copies are sent to Sub-Editors for editing etc. Members of Parliament, if they so desire, may check and make only minor changes in the transcripts of the speeches delivered by them within a period of two hours' before the text of the speeches is sent for final printing. However, no substantial alterations can be made to meaning of what was said in the House. The person, who joins the service as a Reporter or Sub-Editor goes up to the cadre of an Editor over the period of time by getting promotions.

THE SALIENT FEATURES OF THE BRITISH PARLIAMENT

There are certain distinct aspects of the British Parliament. There exists no provision for a joint sitting of the Parliament of the United Kingdom nor is there any scheme like MPLADS available to the British Parliamentarians for local area development. The Members of British Parliament do not get any official accommodation, like their counterparts in India. They simply get accommodation allowance. Similarly, there is no committee to monitor Government Assurances in UK. A Mini Chamber for back benchers is a distinct feature of British Parliament where they get an opportunity to discuss important issues and draw government's attention. The timings of the sittings of both the Houses differ very much. Each House of the British Parliament has a unified and single service for reporting and editing the proceedings of the House. In British Parliamentary system, the clerks of the Houses hold

independent charges of their respective Departments unlike the Indian Parliamentary System.

LONDON CITY, ITS PEOPLE AND ENVIRONMENT

The capital city of Britain, London, is indeed, a very neat and clean as well as green city with very low levels of pollution. It is free of dust and dirt. The standards of cleanliness are very high. There is stunning difference of maintenance of public utilities, i.e. the roads, means of transportation, parks, smooth and orderly traffic on roads that strike one at once when a comparison is drawn in respect of these utilities in the context of our own capital city, New Delhi.

In spite of a very effective, efficient and round the clock system of public transportation i.e. buses, trains, tubes, underground metro etc., People enjoy walking. The pavements along the road sides are always full of people, children, young men and women and elderly people.

London has so many tourist places and places of historical interest and importance like the Buckingham Palace, the residence of the Queen of Britain, River Thames and huge and Palatial buildings standing along its banks, London Bridge, London eye, the Parliament Buildings, Big Ben, 10 Downing Street, the official residence of the British Prime Minister, Westminster Abbey, CPA Headquarters, Sprawling Market places known as Trafalgar Square, Oxford Street, Madam Tussad's Museum, Hyde Park to name a few.

Rains are very frequent here. It is wise to be armed with umbrella all the while when one is outdoors. The city of London is very lively one where people from all over the globe rub their shoulders with each other. People here are very courteous and helpful. We had an extensive tour of the city of London. My stay in this great city of Britain has been a memorable and life-time experience to be cherished for years together.

Overall the training programmed was very interesting, informative and highly professional in its nature. It is suggested that this kind of programmed

should be continued and more and more number of officers should be given opportunity to attend it.

The hospitality extended by RIPA International, London was excellent and all best available facilities were extended to the participants. The Staff of RIPA was quite cordial in nature.

That apart, I also take this opportunity to express my deep sense of thankfulness to the Secretary-General, Rajya Sabha, Hon'ble Dr. V. K. Agnihotri for having afforded me an opportunity like this to take part in the 'Training on Parliamentary Administration at RIPA International, London, U.K. I also thank Officers of the Training Unit (Rajya Sabha), Conference and Protocol Section and all other Sections related directly or indirectly in making excellent arrangements for our journey to and stay at London.

Photocopy of the Certificate issued by RIPA International, London U.K. on successful completion of the training Programme is being attached herewith for your kind perusal and reference purposes.

Submitted please.

(BHALENDU BHUSHAN DWIVEDI)
DEPUTY DIRECTOR (E&T),
RAJYA SABHA SECRETARIAT,
NEW DELHI-110001
Tel: 23035544