

Feedback on the Customised Training Programme on Parliamentary Administration at RIPA International, London (19-30 October 2009)

I was nominated to attend the Customised Training Programme on Parliamentary Administration along with 11 other officers of the Rajya Sabha Secretariat from 19 to 30 October, 2009 at the RIPA International, London (UK). As a Group Leader, I acted as a facilitator and coordinator in having meaningful interactions and exchange of views with the distinguished faculty during the Programme. All the members of the group had meaningful interactions, focused discussions with the speakers and displayed team spirit and good conduct consistent with the fine traditions of our country, Parliament and the Rajya Sabha Secretariat. The noble advice of our respected Secretary-General was a guiding force for all of us throughout the Programme.

2. The Training Programme was conducted under the guidance of Mr. Ian Church, Director of Studies and former Editor, Hansard, House of Commons. Ms. Jenna Mollaney was the Programme Coordinator. On the first day of the Programme, after a brief introduction given by each participant about his/her job profile in the Rajya Sabha Secretariat, Mr. Ian Church briefly touched upon the objectives and purpose of the Programme. The Programme covered varied facets of the British Parliamentary system, namely, the British Constitution, Westminster Parliament, Government, Media, Committee System, Reporting of the Proceedings, Research & Information Services, Human Resource Management, Financial Control and Accountability, etc. The guest faculty who gave lectures or made presentations on these subjects/topics belonged to different areas of specialization. They were the senior officers from the House of Commons and the House of Lords Secretariats, renowned academics, prominent media personality, etc.

3. The lectures/presentations made by the guest speakers were quite educative, informative and enlightening. These enormously helped enrich our understanding about the similarities and differences that exist in the British and the Indian Parliamentary system. While the traditions and customs have important place in the functioning of their parliamentary system, in recent years, however, the reform agenda have been undertaken to enhance its public interface. Besides, underlining the principle of the separation of powers, the Constitutional Reform Act, 2005 *inter alia* provides for the separation of the House of Lords' judicial function and transfers to the new Supreme Court which has been set up in October this year thus ending the judicial function of the House of Lords. The current Law Lords became the first justices of the Supreme Court.

4. Apart from the classroom interactions, we were provided opportunity to witness the proceedings of the House of Commons and one of its Committees by the Director of Studies. Besides, a well informed show-round of both the Houses of Parliament, Westminster Hall, Lobbies, Committee Rooms etc. was also organised. Our visit to the Westminster buildings gave us a rich sense of history relating to the evolution of the modern democracy in the U.K. Furthermore, the Director of Studies also organised a visit to the headquarters of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association located at Westminster House, 7 Millbank, London. Mr. Andrew Imlach, Director of Communications and Research, CPA Secretariat shared his views on the work of the Association and its links with the Commonwealth Parliaments around the world, followed by lively interactions.

5. Secretary-General had instructed to widen the scope of our understanding about the British Parliament and their Secretariat. In this regard, he directed us to discuss with the Course Director to give focused attention to some interesting and model practices/procedures relating to debates, committees, questions,

research & information service, human resource development, etc. which could be considered as useful in our system. The Director of Studies, however, stated that since he did not have the prior knowledge of the job profile of the trainees from the Rajya Sabha Secretariat except their designations, the course designed for the programme could not take into account the specific requirements as suggested. However, he covered some aspects and also provided written literature.

6. I would like to express my gratitude to the Secretary-General for nominating me to attend the programme and also choosing me as Group Leader. I would also like to express my thanks to the Training Unit, Conference and Protocol Section and other sections of the Secretariat which extended support in facilitating the training programme. It was indeed a wonderful and enriching experience. It also gave us fascinating insights into the working of the secretariats of British Parliament. With a high sense of commitment to work, sincerity, discipline and professional ethic, the work culture in UK inspired us to work in a focussed manner in our Secretariat. Besides, exposure to their social milieu was indeed an educative experience.