

REPORT

**A Short Course for Women
Chairs and Staff of
Parliamentary Committees**

**Use of Research, Media and Civil Society
Organisations to enhance effectiveness of
Parliamentary Committees**

May 14, 2006
Hotel Marriott, Islamabad

PILDAT is an independent, non-partisan and not-for-profit indigenous research and training institution with the mission to strengthen democracy and democratic institutions in Pakistan. PILDAT has been actively engaged with building the capabilities of elected Legislators towards a better discharge of their functions of Legislation, Representation and Oversight. PILDAT regularly conducts training/briefing workshops and sessions for Legislators belonging to the National and Provincial Assemblies as well as the Senate. As a non-partisan political research institution, PILDAT regularly prepares well-researched briefing/background papers and Case Studies for Pakistani Parliamentarians, Parliamentary Staff and politicians on a wide range of issues.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

CNN	Cable News Network (USA)
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
CPA	Commonwealth Parliamentary Association
DRSCs	Department Related Standing Committees (Indian Parliament)
IPU	International Parliamentary Union
LA Times	Los Angeles Times
LARRDIS	Library and Reference Research Documentation and Information Services
MMA	Muttehida Majlis-e-Amal
MNAs	Members of National Assembly
MPA	Member of Provincial Assembly
MPs	Members of Parliament
MQM	Muttehida Quami Movement
MRS	Members Reference Service
NAB	National Accountability Bureau
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
PAC	Public Accounts Committee
PARLIS	Parliament Library Information System
PEMRA	Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority
PILS	Parliamentary Institute for Legislative Studies
PML	Pakistan Muslim League
PPPP	Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarian
PTV	Pakistan Television
TV	Television
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America

Acknowledgements

Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development And Transparency-PILDAT wishes to acknowledge the interest, active participation and invaluable contribution of all its participants at this short course for women parliamentary committee chairs and staff.

PILDAT especially wishes to thank the speakers for their time, sharing of their expertise and commitment for this parliamentary development course. In particular we would like to extend our thanks to Mr. G.C. Malhotra, Former Secretary General, Indian Lok Sabha for travelling especially from New Delhi to address the participants of this course and Mr. Syed Talat Hussain, Director News and Current Affairs, Aaj Television for sharing his expertise on the role of media in enhancing effectiveness of parliamentary committees.

We would also like to thank Ms. Mehnaz Raffi, Chairperson National Assembly Standing Committee on Women Development for presiding over session 2 and actively participating in the discourse.

This short course for Women Parliamentary Committee Chairs and Staff on Use of Research, Media and Civil Society Organisations to enhance effectiveness of Parliamentary Committees, was the second in the series of Parliamentary Development Courses organized by PILDAT as part of the Parliamentary Development Course Series for women members of Parliament with support from U.K. Government's Global Opportunity Fund through the British High Commission, Islamabad.

Disclaimer

PILDAT has made every effort to ensure the accuracy of views, discussion and presentations in compiling and editing of this report. PILDAT however does not take any responsibility of any omission or an error since it is not deliberate. The views expressed in this course and presented in this report are those of the resource persons and participants and do not necessarily reflect the views of PILDAT or the supporters of the course.

Background

Parliamentary Development Course Series for Women Parliamentarians

This short course was the 2nd in the series of 5 Parliamentary Development Courses designed by PILDAT exclusively for women MPs to be delivered over the period April to June 2006 in Islamabad. This fresh array of courses focusing on capacity building of women members of Parliament was conceptualized in response to the felt need that despite the recent increase in the number of women entering Parliament in Pakistan with a total of 90 women members currently in the National Assembly and the Senate, their presence has not had the desired impact and effect such representation at this level brings. Many of these women have been brought in without any political orientation and experience. Thus, for an effective and meaningful representation of women in Parliament, it was thought necessary to build the capacities of women legislators to aid them to discharge their responsibilities in the core areas of parliamentary service i.e. Legislation, Representation and Oversight.

It is in this backdrop that PILDAT through this short course on Use of Research, Media and Civil Society Organisations to enhance effectiveness of Parliamentary Committees seeks to develop awareness and understanding among women members of parliamentary committees and parliamentary staff on the role and significance of parliamentary committees in order to increase the effectiveness of these committees. Specific objectives of this course include enhancing awareness among parliamentary committee chairs and staff on the significance of using research and research organisations, media and civil society expertise to enhance effectiveness of parliamentary committees. It also aims to prepare parliamentary committee chairs and staff to effectively use existing avenues of research, the network of the media and the CSOs within the existing framework of parliamentary rules and procedures.

Participation in these courses is meant to provide an ideal opportunity to women MPs to develop parliamentary skills needed to deal with the challenges of committee work by fostering and nurturing good relations between parliament, civil society and media. It also seeks to highlight best practices and examples from other legislatures so as to prepare parliamentary committee chairs and staff to demand improvement in rules, availability of research and improvement of research avenues within Parliament.

Structure of the Parliamentary Development Course

This short course was divided in 2 sessions and was addressed by 2 speakers. **Appendix A** carries the detailed programme of the course.

Briefing folders were prepared by PILDAT which provided relevant information to the course participants. In addition to the programme, profile of resource persons, course feedback form, presentation of speaker, the folders also included a draft directory of civil society organisations related to the working of the Government Ministries prepared by PILDAT especially for this Parliamentary Development Course. **Appendix C** carries presentation of the speaker.

Upon completion of the course participants were presented certificates of participation.

Appendix B carries a list and profile of participating parliamentarians.

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Executive Summary

This Parliamentary Development Course on Use of Research, Media and Civil Society Organisations to enhance effectiveness of Parliamentary Committees was organized by PILDAT with a special emphasis on building the capacities of women Parliamentary committee chairs and parliamentary staff. This short course was designed to equip women parliamentary committee chairs and staff with the skills needed to deal with the challenges of committee work by developing a more purposeful approach to engaging civil society, media and research and information services. The course also aims to help women MPs and parliamentary staff understand how to interact and participate more effectively in parliamentary committees.

This capacity development course held on May 14, 2006 at the Hotel Marriott, Islamabad was attended by 7 women Members of Parliament and 12 parliamentary staff. The women MPs included 4 chairs of parliamentary committees, 2 from the Senate and 2 from the National Assembly and represented the Pakistan Muslim League and Muttahida Qaumi Movement. Of the 12 parliamentary staff 7 were from the National Assembly secretariat and 5 from the Senate secretariat.

Participants of this short course were addressed by a renowned expert on parliamentary practices and procedures, former Secretary General of Indian Lok Sabha, and a prominent media personality, currently leading the news and current affairs at Aaj television network. The workshop was divided into two sessions. Session one presented an overview of using media as a tool to enhance effectiveness of parliamentary committees, session two dealt with the linkages between research and research institutions and civil society with parliamentary committees.

Both the sessions enjoyed a healthy debate and an active interaction was seen between the women MPs, parliamentary staff and the speakers.

The general consensus arrived at by most of the participants was that there is a need to increase the research services and committee staff available to the parliamentary committees. The participants also highlighted the need to increase the interaction between parliamentary staff and the committee members so as to improve the performance of committees.

Course participants evinced keen interest in the comparative study of the parliamentary rules and practices of India and Pakistan by asking numerous questions from the Indian parliamentary expert and learning from his experiences.

One of the crucial issues identified by the parliamentary committee chairs was the lack of response from the government on the recommendations made by the committees. It was emphasised by participants that changes in committee rules need to be made to make it obligatory for the Government to respond to the recommendations sent by the parliamentary committees in order to make committees more effective organs of Parliament.

Discussions also touched on the quality and extent of media coverage of the parliamentary committee proceedings. 'Take a proactive approach in disseminating information in the right form and to the right people', was the advice given by the media expert to women chairs of parliamentary committees. The need to have some mechanism in Parliament which acts as a bridge between the media and the legislatures was also highlighted.

In conclusion participants expressed their appreciation of the short course and described it as a valuable learning experience.

Profiles of Resource Persons

Mr. G.C. Malhotra

Former Secretary General, Indian Lok Sabha



Mr. G.C. Malhotra joined the Indian Lok Sabha Secretariat in 1970 and has been the Secretary General of the Lok Sabha from 1999 to 2005. He has served in various capacities and has been associated with almost every area of the functioning of the Parliament. During his career, Mr. G.C. Malhotra served as Secretary General of the Indian Parliamentary Group, National Group of the IPU and Secretary, India Branch of the CPA. He has also served as Secretary of all India Presiding Officers' Conference and of its standing committee since 1999 and served on various other committees. Amongst many other esteemed positions, Mr. Malhotra has served as Regional Secretary, Asia Region of the CPA from May 2000 to 2005. He has also travelled as a member of Indian Parliamentary delegations to several countries on goodwill visits, and to various Commonwealth Parliamentary Conferences.

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Mr. Syed Talat Hussain

Director News and Current Affairs, Aaj Television



Corporation, Prime Television and TELEBIZ. He also has extensive experience in radio where he has done numerous shows.

In the past he has served as editor of leading English daily newspaper, The News International; former foreign correspondent, column writer, editorial writer with Dawn, Pakistan's respected English daily; and has done similar work for The Nation, one of Pakistan's top English newspapers.

Mr. Hussain is frequently invited to lecture at prestigious forums like National Defence College of Pakistan, Air War College Pakistan, Naval War College Pakistan, Foreign Services Training Academy of Pakistan, Information Services Training Academy of Pakistan and Quaid-e-Azam University.

He has a number of publications to his credit and has done a series of manuals on editing and scripting. At present he is putting together a series of electronic media manual for reporters and producers in collaboration with Asian College of Journalism, India, and Panos, a regional media organisation based in Nepal. He holds a Masters Degree in International Relations. He is widely-travelled and speaks English, Urdu, and Punjabi.

Mr. Syed Talat Hussain is widely recognised as a prominent media personality in Pakistan and is currently serving as Director News and Current Affairs of Aaj Television since November 2004. He also contributes regularly to national and international publications including Time and Newsweek magazines and occasionally to India Today. Previously he has worked with Cable News Network-CNN and American Broadcasting as producer and has done extensive reporting for L.A Times and the New York Times.

As a media professional he has vast experience in establishing news and current affairs systems: he established ARY Television's Islamabad office in 2003 and headed the team that launched Pakistan Television-PTV World News. He has also held key positions of Director News and Current Affairs with Pakistan Television

Welcome and Introduction

Mr. Ahmed Bilal Mehboob

Executive Director, PILDAT



In his opening remarks, Mr. Ahmed Bilal Mehboob, welcomed all the participants, guests and speakers to the short course on behalf of PILDAT and thanked them for especially making the effort to be at the session on a Sunday morning. Mr. Mehboob emphasized that the short course was intended as a collective learning session for women chairs of parliamentary committees and parliamentary committee staff. The purpose was to enhance awareness of legislators and legislative staff on the significance of using research and research organisations, media and civil society expertise to increase the effectiveness of parliamentary committees. He emphasized that the course is an effort to equip the relevant stakeholders with skills needed to deal with the challenges of committee work by fostering and nurturing good relations between Parliament, civil society and media. It also aims to help the parliamentary staff to reach a better understanding of the system and to a better discharge of their function in that system.

Mr. Mehboob said that it is widely acknowledged that effective performance of Parliament depends on the effective performance of parliamentary committees. He said that in countries like USA, UK and also India parliamentary committees are assisted by hundreds of dedicated research personnel and organisations. The successful performance of committees depends largely on the support provided by the legislative staff and team of experts in the form of timely, accurate and concise information on topics under deliberation in the committees. Unfortunately in Pakistan, he said committees do not have such research and support facilities available, which constrains their effective performance. He stressed that efforts need to be made to provide better research and support facilities to MPs. Mr. Mehboob added that as media, research and civil society organisations in Pakistan are a rich source of expertise they can also be used by parliamentary committee members and staff to enhance their performance. He said that this session will focus on how committee chairs and staff can effectively utilise existing avenues of research, the network of media and CSOs within the existing framework of parliamentary rules and procedures.

Welcome remarks were followed by a brief introduction of all the participants of the course. After the introductions, Mr. Mehboob invited Mr. G.C. Malhotra to chair session one.

Session 1

Media as a tool to enhance effectiveness of Parliamentary Committees

Mr. Syed Talat Hussain

Director News and Current Affairs, Aaj Television

Mr. Syed Talat Hussain began his presentation by saying that in order to use media as a resource to support the work of parliamentary committees in Pakistan, it was very crucial to understand what is meant by “media”. He pointed out that usually media is limited to television, radio and newspapers. Television dominates the media because of the abundance of images and visual effects it provides to the viewers, newspapers are popular due to the range of views and analysis presented in its columns, and radio as it has the largest outreach to the population in the country. He said that according to the figures given by PEMRA, radio services reach almost 67 % of Pakistan's rural population, whereas only 33 % of the rural population have access to TV. He added that outreach of TV is still much less as compared to the availability of the network of radio services in rural areas. Mr. Hussain stated that print media should not only be limited to national, provincial, and local newspapers but also include magazines and journals published by a variety of organisations. He said that although there are about 4500 registered newspapers and magazines etc in the country, he is of the opinion that the actual numbers are much more than this.

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Mr. Syed Talat Hussain said that in addition to the three areas commonly perceived as “media”, in today's world we also have to include the new technology known as the complete media technology, by which we mean the internet facility. He said that in the past internet was limited to text only but now it has become an interactive media in which you have text, voice and picture as well. He added that now internet providers are trying to link internet users to TV programmes in those rural areas in the country where internet facility is already available.

Elaborating on other important areas to consider within media, Syed Talat Hussain said that we have to move our focus beyond the internet and direct our attention to the next big revolution related to media in Pakistan. He said that this would be seen in the form of cinema, theatre, soft programming and politically humorous programmes. Journalists who report on and investigate issues and bring them before the public are also key players in the domain of media, he said. Looking at the combined outreach of all these forms of media, Mr. Hussain said that an estimated 45% of the country's population is covered by the private media sector. He stressed that issues highlighted and brought to the attention of the public by the private sector are generally believed and accepted. He opined that as the credibility of the private sector media was much higher as compared to the public sector media, there was a need to make a distinction between the two. Mr. Hussain noted that the combined outreach of both public and private sector media in Pakistan is almost 90%. He added that Pakistan Television also has a vast outreach to the Pakistani community living outside the country. If one overlooks the public-private divide and looks at media as a whole including film, theatre, drama etc. then one can see why media is so important in this society. He believed that media is a force which has the greatest outreach, does not recognize boundaries, can be used to educate people and is an interactive resource. He said that media is not a one way communication channel, rather it functioned as an interactive mode receiving feedback from the people. This Mr. Hussain opined was one of the basic reasons for importance of the media.

Elaborating on other reasons for the importance of the media, Mr. Hussain said that other institutions in the country such as the Judiciary, Parliament and Local Government whose responsibility is to deliberate on issues and have systems of accountability in place are weak and not effectively implementing their mandates and writ. He believed that weaknesses of these institutions and their inability to respond to the needs of society make the role of

media more important. He said that debates taken up by these institutions have very low credibility among the masses which is further highlighted by the fact that these deliberations are not done in a timely manner, as opposed to the immediate response of the media on these issues.

Mr. Hussain noted the role of the media in the reporting of local political conflicts as the third reason for the media to be an important entity in the country. He explained that many issues such as corruption, transparency, how people's money is spent, implementation of development projects, and any other major crisis in the country is reported by the media in an objective manner. The information presented by people involved in these conflicts is seen as being subjective and partial to their own interests. However, he said that the media highlights these issues from a distance and keeps away from getting involved in the politics. This adds credibility to the views presented by the media and makes it an important and reliable source of information for the public.

Highlighting the needs of the media, Mr. Hussain said that the media does not work for itself, rather it works with the objective of providing information to the people. Thus what media needs is information. He said that if the media does not provide the needed information then its importance will be reduced. He believed that media is an industry which will close down if it does not have any information or become only a speculative body which is likely to reduce the credibility of this institution. The media is not only a forum of debate, it is also a forum for providing information. He said in order to provide information one needs to have information.

Linking the issue of having access to information with the parliamentary committee system, Mr. Hussain opined that the rules, procedures and mandates of parliamentary committees give the members the authority to access whatever information they need on the subject under review by the committee. He said that committee members can request information from the executive or call anyone for giving his/her expert advice or opinion on the issue under investigation. He highlighted that the committee members also have the power to make a public enquiry of a matter brought to their notice by the House or by taking suo motto notice of an issue and make recommendations for addressing the issue. He said that recommendations made by committee members have a lot of weight as these are made by public representatives who have been entrusted by the people to represent their interests in parliament. Recommendations made by journalists are not taken as

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seriously as the ones given by the parliamentary committees. He said that as each committee is usually specialised in a certain subject, the committee members gain lot of knowledge and get the opportunity to develop expertise on a particular issue by following up on an issue over time. He opined that one of the major flaws in journalism is that reporters may not always follow-up on an issue over time and thus do not always develop expertise on that subject. Mr. Hussain believed that these combined powers of a legal mandate, making enquiries, investigations and recommendations indicate that parliamentary committees actually wield more power than journalists within their own area of work.

In Mr. Hussain's view the committee members should share the key issues discussed in the committees with the media as this would help in strengthening the accountability of these forums. He reiterated that media's biggest strength is its capacity to reach out to the public. He pointed out that the parliamentarians outreach is limited to the approximately 30 million people in the country who gave their support to the MPs in the last general elections in 2002. Whereas, he said the media has access to about 60 million people in the country. However, he said you cannot always put limits on media's outreach as people are watching and listening to you outside of Pakistan also. He said that parliamentary committees should fill the information gaps and provide media with the necessary information. He stressed that this will ensure more reliable and effective reporting.

In concluding his talk, Mr. Syed Talat Hussain said that although parliamentary committees are vested with the powers to investigate, enquire and recommend, in practice this is not always the case in Pakistan. Giving example of few cases presented to the Public Accounts Committee, he said that despite the highlighting of the sugar crisis by the media for many months the PAC did not take up the issue as it said it was not the competent authority to deal with this matter. After which the National Accountability Bureau tried taking up the matter but later dropped the case. He also referred to other cases put before committees such as the report of the Auditor General showing embezzlement of Rs. 1.43 million from the Zakat Fund, irregularities in the cricket board, issues of the less-developed areas etc, which he said are not taken up by these committees. He opined that these decisions reflect the level of influence and control wielded by vested political interests over the workings of these committees, thereby limiting their role and making them ineffective. In the end he suggested that in light of these findings there was a need to create linkages between

the parliamentary committees and media which he said would be an effective way to strengthen the accountability

Remarks by Session Chair

Mr. G.C. Malhotra

Former Secretary General, Indian Lok Sabha

Mr. G.C. Malhotra thanked Mr. Syed Talat Hussain for his indepth analysis on the role of the media and parliamentary committees in providing information to the people and how the parliamentary committees and media can work together for strengthening the democratic practices in the country. He said that he would make a few comments related to some of the issues raised by Mr. Hussain in his presentation.

Commenting on the suggestion of Mr. Hussain on the need of parliamentary committees to provide information to media, Mr. Malhotra said that there was a time in India when whatever took place in Parliament was “news” and the media used to cover it regularly. Parliament took the lead and media simply reported their views from the galleries. However, he said that this pattern slowly changed over time and led to a reversal of roles with the media taking the lead and Parliament usually deliberating on issues which were first reported in the press.

He said that in this way a vicious circle developed where the

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legislatures were more focused on getting attention from the media rather than making the effort of making serious speeches in the House on issues of national importance. The media also tended to prefer reporting on frivolous activities of parliamentarians on the floor of the House, rather than writing on the more serious issues presented in the House by some parliamentarians. Mr. Malhotra added that journalists also find reporting on technical issues more difficult than the lighter issues like rumpus in the House or walking out by opposition etc. He said that media also focuses on reporting those stories which helps it in increasing the paper's circulation. Thus a vicious circle is created in which both the media and parliamentarians are playing up to each others needs and interests. Mr. Malhotra opined that in order to strengthen democratic practices in the country it is necessary to have a watchful judiciary, responsible executive and legislature and a vigilant media all working in tandem with each other.

Referring to committee meetings, Mr. Malhotra noted that in India parliamentary committee meetings are held in-camera and the media is not invited to attend. However he said that there is an ongoing debate on the merits and demerits of such a system. He said it is felt that the bi-partisan nature of committee work will be lost if the media is allowed to cover committee meetings. But some also feel that the members do not get enough media exposure if meetings are held in-camera, he said. As a result of this situation, Mr. Malhotra pointed out the chairperson of the committee, with the permission of the Speaker does give briefings to the press in some cases.

Mr. Malhotra went on to say that it is very crucial to have some mechanism in Parliament which acts as a bridge between the media and the legislatures. He said that in India there is the Press and Public Relations division in the Lok Sabha which provides all services needed by the media like internet facility, press rooms etc.

Concluding his comments Mr. Malhotra informed the participants that in India there are now two 24 hour TV channels, one for the Lok Sabha and the other for the Rajya Sabha which broadcast the plenary sessions of both the Houses from 11 am to around 7 pm. Remainder of the time is used by other programmes related to parliamentary issues. He said that it is still being debated whether or not to have a programme which would provide a weekly gist of issues taken up by parliamentary committees.



Q & A / Comments

Question

Ms. Mehnaz Raffi
 MNA, PML

I agree with Mr. Malhotra and Mr. Syed Talat Hussain's observations that the past tradition of the Parliament leading the media has changed to one in which the media influences the issues which are discussed in the House. Most of the time on points of order is spent on discussion of issues which are reported in the press, and no time is left to discuss important issues.

Mr. Hussain mentioned the PAC and its handling of the sugar case which was presented before the committee. I would like to point out that the findings of the committee did show that of the 80 sugar mills in the country only 9 are owned by current members of the cabinet, 18 belong to two former Prime Ministers of Pakistan and the remaining 53 sugar mills are owned by other individuals who have nothing to do with politicians in power. But the media played up the case in a very negative manner and only blamed the government for the crisis. The media tends to report more on non-serious issues like what members are wearing, who they are talking to etc. I think the media should report issues in a positive manner instead of always taking the opportunity to flag the government only. The media should be aware of their responsibility to do more balanced and fair

reporting.

I am chairperson of the Committee on Women Development. I invited the media to attend the committee meeting on March 8th, International Women's Day, but no media representative came to attend the meeting. I would like to ask Mr. Syed Talat Hussain who is a prominent journalist that why do the media people only go after glamour and money and avoid highlighting the more serious issues?

I think the joint committee system in India which is more effective than the separate committee system in Pakistan. We are faced with shortage of support staff, as the limited staff we have is assigned to almost 10 or 12 committees, with each committee meeting almost every day of the month. How can the staff do justice to their work with such a workload? In such a set up the committees are not able to function effectively and efficiently. I would request PILDAT to lobby on our behalf to introduce the joint committee system in our country.

Answer

Mr. G.C. Malhotra
 Former Secretary General, Indian Lok Sabha

I agree with your comments on the committee system. We

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will discuss these in detail in the second session.

Answer

Mr. Syed Talat Hussain

Director News and Current Affairs, Aaj Television

First of all I would like to thank you for raising the points related to media's role in portrayal of issues in the press. What you have said is true. I think that we do not need to have an argument on these issues. I would like to make a few points. Mr. Mehboob in his opening remarks mentioned that the effectiveness of Parliament depends on the effectiveness of the parliamentary committees, but I feel that the plenary Parliament is the prime platform for MPs, and the committees despite being very important and central to the working of Parliament cannot be a substitute to the full House. The point I want to raise is that the environment and culture you find in the House, be it intrigues of members or whispering with each other is also transferred to the committees. We should be honest with ourselves and accept that to some extent the members who are not effective in Parliament will mostly not be effective in committees. In order for the media to report more positively on the activities of Parliament and parliamentary committees, these bodies also have to make the effort to work in a more effective manner.

With reference to handling of issues by PAC such as the sugar crisis, the point I wanted to bring out was that an important issue which could have been resolved by the committee was overlooked and no follow-up action was taken to address the matter. As a consumer, I do want that a matter that I face every day should be deliberated and investigated and those involved in the malpractices should be held accountable. I just want to stress that the media reports whatever information it gets, and it is not the responsibility of the media to separate national affairs from the politics behind the issue. It is the job of the committees and the MPs to effectively support the interests of the citizens whom they represent in Parliament. Thus the media cannot be blamed for the inefficient working of Parliament. I do acknowledge though that the journalists do tend to chase a shooting star and when that fades away they go after another one. Certainly, I accept that the media does play up an issue, and reporting by journalists may not be as balanced as it should be.

Many times we have complaints by organisations that their activities are not reported by the press while news of other

organisations is always promptly put in the papers. We cannot only blame the media for that. I think you cannot always depend on the media to do the chasing. Individuals and organisations also have to be more organised and maintain regular contact with the media in order to get the media more proactively involved in covering their events or other activities. In order for the committees and media to effectively work together to promote an effective system of accountability they have to understand each other's intricacies. It is not enough only to have information available or realize the importance of having information. As I said earlier the committees and the media have to be married in order for them to understand how they both function. It is also important that you effectively articulate the information to the media. This will ensure more accurate reporting.

Secondly you have talked about "envelop" journalism. We will not discuss that as it is too wide a topic to take up in this session. Let us look at the positive side, that the Parliament wields a lot of power and so does the media. We should focus on how we can interlace the two to achieve maximum results.

Question

Ms. Gul-e-Farkhanda

MNA, PML

I would like to welcome Mr. Malhotra to Islamabad and Pakistan. I am chairperson of National Assembly Standing Committee on Population Welfare. I would like to tell Mr. Syed Talat Hussain that basically I am a journalist and have also been working on social development issues with civil society organisations. You have said that it is important to understand media and send them timely information. Let me say that chairpersons of our committees know what information they want to provide the media and when to provide this information. It is the media which is flawed. They are more focused on chasing advertisements in order to make more money. The reporting skills of many journalists are quite weak, generally most of them do not have the requisite research skills, which is reflected in the poor manner that our committee meetings are reported in the press. I must admit that even our government officials are not well-informed or knowledgeable on the issues which they are working on.

I feel that news should neither be positive or negative. It should be neutral. Our newspapers do not present news in a

neutral manner.

The government ministries are also not working in an effective manner. The budget of the Ministry of Population Welfare increased 700 times, but the situation at the health outlets is same as before. My attempts to bring such cases to the notice of the Minister have not had any positive results. I have tried to get such news reported in the papers, but the reporters have not shown any interest in writing on this matter.

Answer

Mr. Syed Talat Hussain

Director News and Current Affairs, Aaj Television

I agree with the points you have raised, but I would not like to go into a debate on who is right and who is wrong. We are all sitting on a platform where we can try and make things better for the common man. We should focus on the positive energy which we can release from this platform.

I am a journalist and can tell you that journalists do not chase after advertisements. It is the owner of the newspaper who goes after getting advertisements for his paper. Actually there are many differences between the journalists and the employers, which are seen in the differences on the wage board. These differences are present in all countries and not just in Pakistan. Please also keep this distinction in mind. Actually the journalists are always complaining that they bring stories, whereas the owners are giving more space to advertisements. Now you have half page and even full page ads in the newspapers. The journalists feel that the owners are squeezing them out of space.

Secondly what you said about journalists not taking an interest in reporting is not really correct. There might be some instances that this may happen. According to my calculations there are 125 issues which are potential headline making issues of Pakistan. I would like to mention that like committee members, journalists are also faced with lack of resources. They have to work with low salaries, inadequate facilities and workspace.

As far as glamour is concerned, media all over the world, not only in Pakistan follow the glamour trail. There are some issues which are not so glamorous. Mr. Malhotra mentioned technical issues, journalists feel that they do not need to develop knowledge or understanding on these

issues as they just have to report the information that is given to them. However, with the introduction of television this has changed. The quality of journalism has improved. Secondly as pictures are central to the power of TV showing human conditions through pictorial images is very effective way of communication. So, if you want to show problems faced by people, you just have to take a cameraman there and the story will definitely be one of the top three lead stories on TV. Report by a journalist on the same story in the press will not have the same impact.

We can explain to members of Parliament on platforms like the session today on the power of the different components of the media and how you can engage with them more productively.

Critical media was also present in past, but the strength and power you are seeing these days is because of TV being pictorial. It is in your face, it is in your home, and it is everywhere.

Another important issue is whether we are effectively using the media of the public sector. We should use the public media as a source of public based information. The important thing is that media and Parliament need to develop a stronger understanding of each others viewpoints. As the media people are always on the go, the Parliamentarians have to make the effort to engage our attention.

Answer

Mr. G.C. Malhotra

Former Secretary General, Indian Lok Sabha

I would like to add to what Mr. Hussain has just said regarding the problems faced by the press correspondents. In India such problems are overcome with the Speaker taking a personal interest and having separate meetings with the reporters, editors and owners of newspapers urging them to give due coverage to Parliament. Such interactions are useful in solving the issues of press correspondents. Secretary Senate Raja Muhammed Amin is here and we can request him to arrange such meetings between the media and the Chairman of the Senate and the Speaker of the House.

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Comment**Ms. Mehnaz Raffi**

MNA, PML

I want to say that we have a media cell in our Parliament and many people are employed in that cell. But the staff of this cell is not concerned about reporting the work of the committees or of the House to the media and is mostly occupied in publicity of their bosses. This is a major reason that the press and Parliament has not been able to develop an equation with each other.

Question**Ms. Afsar Begum**

MNA, MQM

The media does not provide coverage or report on the important issues which are deliberated in parliamentary committees. Why does this happen? As the matters are not highlighted in the press there is no awareness among the public on these issues and many times no action is taken on them and they just elapse. The media needs to pro-actively cover these important meetings and inform the general public on the issues under discussion as many important bills and amendments are also finalised in these meetings.

Answer**Mr. Syed Talat Hussain**

Director News and Current Affairs, Aaj Television

One thing is very clear here that the basic work of the committees cannot take place through the media. The committees are part of a system which gives them the power to carry out their work. We, as journalists only want to know how we can work together with the committees to enhance their powers. Even in the past when the role of media was not so strong, the committees were working effectively, within their limited domain. Now we are only trying to see, if the media has the potential, how it can help committees play a more effective role.

Second, the committees' proceedings are covered by the press. If you take a look at the percentage of coverage by the TV and newspapers you will see that it is gradually increasing. The reporting of the committee meetings has moved from the inner pages of the newspapers to the front and back pages of these papers. Coverage on TV has also become more prominent and committee news is part of

main news bulletins. The general coverage may not be as much as you would like it to be but it is nonetheless increasing. How we can increase the pace of coverage remains a challenge for us. The best way to achieve wider coverage is through aggressive peddling of the case, this is very important. You need to provide information which is of public interest, constant engagement and interaction with media, projection on platforms like today's session, and some time it is necessary to send information to media in easy to understand language. The role of the committee staff is very important in such matters. They need to send the summary of your speeches or activities to the media and present it in a concise and succinct manner, as the journalists and TV comperes work around the clock and do not have the time to sift out and decipher information from tons of papers sent by your staff, the simpler the information is presented the better it will be projected by the media. This means that you as committee members have to take the time and make the effort to bring issues to the attention of the media in such a manner that it facilitates their reporting on these issues. I hope you will agree with me that coverage of committee work is there and has been increasing significantly over time.

Comment**Ms. Afsar Begum**

MNA, MQM

I am a member of the communications committee, where we discuss a lot of important national issues. In yesterday's meeting we made amendments related to the National Highway Authority, which I think have been done after 141 years. I feel that such major policy changes need to be brought to the attention of the public.

Comment**Ms. Mehnaz Raffi**

MNA, PML

I agree with Mr. Syed Talat Hussain that there was a time when Parliament was working well on its own, when there was no presence of the media as is today. The difference between that time and today is that despite the efforts of committee members to lobby with the Ministers, our recommendations mostly do not get followed up by the government. These days unless there is a lot of pressure built up on the government to take action on an issue, they do not implement any recommendations that are made by

committee members. I can give you the example of the report submitted by my Committee on Women's Development, the government has taken no action on any of our recommendations. I want to stress that if media helps us in building public pressure on the government then only can we expect it to respond to take notice of our demands.

Comment

Ms. Gul-e-Farkhanda

MNA, PML

I want to also say that the actual work of a Parliament takes place in the parliamentary committees. Therefore it is essential that media plays an active role in positively portraying the committee activities and highlighting the issues being taken up by the committees. The support of the media also helps in building the trust of the people in the work of the committees. The public must be informed about our monitoring of the executive, the questions we raise and also the follow-up taken by the Ministries. Otherwise they may perceive MPs mostly as filling the seats in the House, or enjoying the privileges of being a member or taking home a monthly salary.

Comment

Mr. Ahmed Bilal Mehboob

Executive Director, PILDAT

There was a time when newspapers were only considered as media, whereas now TV has taken over and dominates the media. I want to draw your attention to another form of media, the web or internet, which is not as powerful a media as TV but is gaining power at a fast pace. The difference between the two is that TV may not be in your control, but the web is in your control. If you take some time out of your schedule and spend a little time and visit the website of the National Assembly and Senate you will find that the reports produced by the committee are put on the website only the next day. If you feel that the report is not accurate or is not representing your views, you can immediately make the necessary changes, as these are in your control. In this way information will be available to the media to use in making their reports for the press. These days the media does not have time to chase you for getting the information, they access information from the internet. You can help them and yourselves by putting all the information on the web so that neither you have to run after them nor they have to run after you. These days the main source of our information is the web with the use of the internet increasing each day,

thus your information will be accessible to people round the world. I would suggest that members should try and improve the quality of the websites of the National Assembly and the Senate and compare them with the websites of the Indian and British Parliaments which have separate websites for their committees. You can post your activities, minutes, pictures or any other information on these sites, and it is not even expensive. In this way you will see that the media will use the information on their own and report it in the press and TV.

Answer

Mr. G.C. Malhotra

Former Secretary General, Indian Lok Sabha

I agree with Mr. Mehboob that these days the web has become a very important and useful form of media. But it is also important to update the information you provide on the website. Sometimes information provided by the government gets outdated and loses its usefulness. If you highlight the recommendations in your report it will be easier for the reporters to pick out this information instead taking the time to look for them in the report. You can also post the press release on the net and the media people can pick it up from there.

Question

Ms. Riffat Javaid Kahlon

MNA, PML

I am the Parliamentary Secretary for Information Technology and Telecommunication. First, I will say that I feel that I am not an effective Parliamentary Secretary, as I am not given the opportunity to give an answer to any question raised in Parliament and am not supposed to even ask any question. The Minister and Minister of State do not give me the opportunity to play my role effectively. Sometimes I question my role as Parliamentary Secretary and wonder what really is my role as a member of Parliament. I leave my constituency to come here and attend parliamentary sessions but I am constrained in playing my due role. I feel I play a more effective role as a committee member than as an MP.

Mr. Syed Talat Hussain rightly pointed out that media has no borders. But I think that at times barriers are enforced by media in India. When I visit India, I cannot watch Pakistan TV channels as these have been blocked by the Indian government, whereas in Pakistan one can watch Indian TV

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channels.

Second, I want to say that as member of the Minority Committee, I was investigating the issue of the burning of churches, in response to the cartoons appearing in the Danish newspapers, in Sukkur and Sangla. Our sub-committee handed over the report after visiting Sukkur, but we have not received any response from the Ministry so far. We are also still waiting to make the trip to Sangla but it keeps getting delayed. The role of the chairman of the committee is crucial to the effective working of the committee. Through this example I want to stress that work of the committees is not taken seriously by the government and also by the chairs of the committees.

Third, when I go to my constituency in Narowal, I see that the media does not provide coverage to me, and concentrates on the other two MPs from that area as they happen to be members of the cabinet. These journalists sell out to people in power and consequently I suffer politically. I think this negative role played by the media needs to be addressed.

Next, I want to highlight that we as committee members are not always well-informed about issues being debated in other committees. When the sugar crisis was taken up by the PAC, no information was provided to us on the details of the case or why the PAC had suddenly decided to close the case. There is no transparency in the working of the committee system.

Last, I feel the media only goes after the young and glamorous and overlooks the serious workers. The press reporters need to make the effort to find out and then report on the work which so many committed MPs are doing. Could you please comment on all these points? Thanks.

Answer

Mr. Syed Talat Hussain

Director News and Current Affairs, Aaj TV

First, let me point out again that the private media has nothing to do with the policies of PTV and thus I cannot comment on why PTV only provides coverage to activities of Ministers from your constituency and not the other MPs from that area. You should perhaps put this question to the standing committee which deals with information and media issues. The committee has the powers to investigate

the matter in-depth and find answers to all your queries.

You referred to journalists taking bribes from politicians. Most of these journalists are being paid off mostly by politicians who have close affiliations with the government in power and not by the politicians from the opposition. I know that there are an estimated 150 journalists who are on the payroll of these individuals. It is generally known that they are paid off from a secret fund of the Ministry of Information.

Ms. Mehnaz Raffi

MNA, PML

Being members of the Committee on Information, Gul-eFarkhanda and myself raised this issue of paying off journalists in the committee. But the Minister at that time got very angry and upset with us for bringing up this matter before the committee and was not ready to respond to our queries.

Answer

Mr. Syed Talat Hussain

Director News and Current Affairs, Aaj TV

Personally, I do not want to give too much of my time to the category of journalists who even the fraternity of journalism disowns. It is not my concern. I want to focus on areas where you can do better work in terms of networking and reaching out to journalists. This is the fundamental point I want to make with you.

When I talk of glamour, I am not referring to the personal glamour of an individual, but to the glamour of an issue. You should realise that there are "glamorized issues" also. I think that the task before the members of the parliamentary committees is essentially to find the techniques to glamorize their issues, and not focus on the glamour of personalities. Many of these issues are already making front page headlines. You see a lot of coverage in the press on social issues such as education, health, communication etc which was not there before. These subjects were normally the beat of the weaker reporters. You must accept that this trend is changing and you need to ride with that tide. The best way to do that is to make the effort to increase your contact and interaction with the media people. The most effective chairman of a parliamentary committee is Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, and not only because he

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is a former journalist and has his own network, but because he understands how the media industry works. He is an insider and has a strong style of networking. You as members and chairs of committees also need to get into that style of networking, not for personal PR but for highlighting the issues. Why do you think the report of the special committee on Balochistan headed by Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, has become the basic reference point on the debate on Balochistan? It is because wherever he goes he brings a copy of the report. He has come in my program four times and he has come with the same report. I have four copies of the report for reference. This is his way of highlighting the issue. I think you need to learn what we call the "media strategy" from your colleagues who are getting more coverage in papers and on TV. I want to urge you to make a little noise, working quietly in your committees does not get you much attention from the media. You have to seek the media's attention. That is the nature of the beast, not only in Pakistan but all over the world.

Answer**Mr. G.C. Malhotra**

Former Secretary General, Indian Lok Sabha

Point raised by Ms. Kahlon on restrictions imposed on Pakistani media to broadcast programmes in India is well taken. But I am not competent to answer the question as to why such restrictions are imposed.

Question**Senator Kalsoom Parveen**

PML

I am chairperson of Committee on Narcotics. In my opinion the role of media is very important for parliamentarians and for parliamentary committees. No issue gets public attention until it is highlighted in the print media or electronic media. If issues like the rape case of Dr. Shazia Khalid and Mukhtaran Mai can be highlighted by the media, then why important issues and recommendations of parliamentary committees cannot be highlighted as well. Recommendations made by my committee are very seldom highlighted by the either the print or electronic media, from private or public sector. In one instance when issues raised by my committee were highlighted on television, and the public became aware of the committees

work, they supported me through suggestions, e-mails and other contacts which helped in building pressure on the government to accept the committees recommendations. Thus committees can work more effectively if they are supported by the media. Although I agree with Mr. Hussain that the trend is changing and private channels are giving lot of coverage to serious issues, and to the work of committees, but I feel much more needs to be done in this regard.

TV channels tend to invite only a select group of people to their talk shows. I am in politics since 1988 and have never been called to any programme on any private or public TV channel. Why are TV channels so selective in inviting individuals to their talk shows? Perhaps you are right that we need to make some noise and get heard.

Answer**Mr. Syed Talat Hussain**

Director News and Current Affairs, Aaj TV

You may be right that the same people are invited to TV shows most of the time, but let me explain why this happens. There is no personal issue of whom to call or whom to leave out. As a journalist, who handles news and current affairs rather at a senior level and having the experience of working with many TV networks, I can tell you that producers of television programmes always want to call new people to their programmes. But they are not connected to many people or do not know whom to call and are thus unable to invite them to the programmes. This disconnect between the media and the public is the main reason that they do not make it to the television shows. If you enhance your profile a little bit and reach out to media then these disconnections can be removed.

As I mentioned earlier the successful working of the media industry rests largely on availability of information. The media thus needs the information which you can provide to them. There is no reason why they will not report such information in the press or through TV talk shows. I want to stress that the private media is professional, focused and wants to do good work and needs your support in so doing. Let's find a platform from where we can work together to achieve better results. PILDAT has provided us with this platform, but we need to institutionalise this platform and make it part of the system. I will follow-up and organise a

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series of programmes to look at the work of parliamentary committees and invite you to give your views on the subject. But in the context of developing a larger media strategy, I think you have to work on enhancing your profile and breaking the current disconnect that exists between you and the media.

Question

Ms. Mehnaz Raffi

MNA, PML

I have been in politics for 30 years, been beaten up by the police, remained in jail three times under Gen. Zia-ul-Haq's reign and twice in Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto's rule and have been arrested during Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's government, but have never been invited to come on TV shows. Geo television has never called me to their programmes in the past four years. They call those politicians on TV shows who do not even have a deep understanding of the issues as they do not have a strong link with politics. These politicians have not struggled to find their place in politics, but are newcomers who have no experience. Yet the media prefers to invite them instead of politicians like myself. Why does this happen?

Answer

Mr. Syed Talat Hussain

Director News and Current Affairs, Aaj TV

I do not think there is any conspiracy behind Geo television not calling you to their shows. But if you feel that you are being specifically targeted then you should approach the management and bring it to their notice. You need to have a multiple strategy to connect with the media. It does not only rest on your personal appearance on TV shows. You also have to make the effort to provide any information you want to the media, by going to their office yourself and giving them the data. You also have to ensure that the information is presented in a clear, articulate and effective manner. Following up on the information is equally important. So please give us information, pester us and keep reminding us. That is the how it works.

Senator Kalsoom Parveen

PML

Although I belong to Balochistan, and it being a burning issue these days, Geo has never called me to their talk

shows either. They keep showing the same people over and over again, who have nothing new to say. One is fed up with that. Can you tell me why I have not been called?

Answer

Mr. Syed Talat Hussain

Director News and Current Affairs, Aaj TV

If you have serious concerns then you should try and address them. As I said earlier go and meet the management of the TV networks against whom you have a grudge. I want to stress that you have to make the effort of making the connect with the media. Mr. Danyal Aziz, Ms. Sherry Rehman and I can name others, they are constantly sending us reports, e-mails, text messages etc to keep us informed on their activities. Ms. Rehman has a list of 150 journalists and editors on her mobile and she constantly sends information to them through these text messages. The point I want to make is that we have to have the information in order to report on it. So send us information and we will use it.

Mr Ahmed Bilal Mehboob

Executive Director, PILDAT

Let us do a hypothetical case study of any personality who frequently comes on TV and is popular in the media. If we make an analysis of how he/she achieved this success, you will find that they have worked hard and done their homework. This is essential if you want to maintain a high profile in the media. I want to give you a little tip, a little suggestion may be it would be useful for you. I have already talked about the growing importance and use of the web site. You can create your own personal website. It will cost only around two thousand rupees and take about two hours to set up. Please put all information related to you or your committee' activities on the website and update it on a weekly basis. You can also develop an e-mail system on your computer or in the text messaging system of your mobile. When you update any thing on your website you can send an e-mail or a text message to inform the media of this new information. If you make a system of text messaging or e-mail within 6 months you will see that your personal projection in the media has improved significantly.

Question

Senator Rehana Yahya Baloch
PML

I am from Balochistan where we face many law and order situations. Media coverage is mostly being given to the few Baloch Sardars who are creating the unrest in the Province, instead of projecting the root causes of these conflicts or finding out who supports these Sardars or why they are being allowed to continue with their unlawful activities. The media can help in improving this situation by calling the right people on their TV shows and highlighting these issues so that action is taken to address these serious issues. Since last three years three to four bomb blasts occur almost every night. Such issues need to be brought to the attention of the public.

What can our committees do for promoting education in Balochistan? What can we do for the people who have minimal access to education facilities in the Province? Can the media highlight the education issue?

Answer

Mr. Syed Talat Hussain

Director News and Current Affairs, Aaj TV

The government has provided us with a list of 8 individuals whom we can call to talk on the issues of Balochistan and no woman's name is on this list. But you can initiate your own contacts with the media and at the cost of repeating myself, please provide us with information and keep in touch with us. In this way your name will remain in our minds when we are looking for people to invite to our shows.

Question

Ms. Mehnaz Raffi
MNA, PML

Mr. Malhotra could you tell us what are the powers of the parliamentary committees in India? Are their recommendations binding on the government?

Answer

Mr. G.C. Malhotra

Former Secretary General, Indian Lok Sabha

The committee recommendations are not binding on the

government. But when committees give unanimous recommendations to the government, it cannot afford not to give due weightage to them.

Referring to the list of names mentioned by Mr. Syed Talat Hussain, I do not think the private media is bound by any such list.

Answer

Mr. Syed Talat Hussain

Director News and Current Affairs, Aaj TV

We are not bound by these lists and we do call people whose names are not provided to us. But we prefer to get such lists from the political parties, as it is easier for us to get collective information rather than chasing too many people.

Question

Mr. Mehboob Ali

Deputy Secretary, Senate

According to the rules committee reports in Pakistan are supposed to be confidential and are not to be made public. However in practice, many times these reports are reported in the press the next day. I think first reports should be presented in the House and then given to the press. If committee members want to make their reports public then they need to frame new rules which allow the committees to make their findings and recommendations available to the public.

Answer

Mr. G.C. Malhotra

Former Secretary General, Indian Lok Sabha

What you are saying is correct. According to the rules committee reports cannot be made public. In India sometimes the committee takes special permission from the Speaker to hold a briefing for the press on the highlights of the meeting. But sometimes information does leak out and it is difficult to find out who is responsible. There is not much one can do other than use the breach of privilege rule against a member. That is not a good idea as it breaks the underlying spirit of committee members working in consensus with each other.

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Question**Mr. Sharafat Hussain Niazi**

Deputy Secretary, Senate

I am secretary to the committees in the Senate I have responsibility of supporting six committees. You have mentioned that in India committee meetings are held in-camera and are not open meetings. According to my knowledge usually in a committee there are about 12 members, the quorum is only of three members and normally only three or four members attend a meeting. The meeting is also to be attended by the related Minister, Secretary and his junior officers. I would like to know what you mean by having an open committee meeting? Who else do you think should attend the meeting?

Answer**Mr. G.C. Malhotra**

Former Secretary General, Indian Lok Sabha

By having an open meeting I mean that media and the general public should also be allowed to observe the proceedings like it is the practice in England. This is also under discussion in India. In India Ministers are barred from committee meetings. In Pakistan the Ministers are ex-officio members of the committees. In my opinion, a Ministers presence in the committee can at times encourage the members to take party lines on issues under discussion, especially the members from the treasury benches who cannot openly give an opposing view in the presence of a Minister. In camera meetings have a drawback that media is not there to report on their meeting but its advantage is that members are free to express their opinion and criticise the government and reach a consensus on the issue being discussed

Question**Mr. Sharafat Hussain Niazi**

Deputy Secretary, Senate

Secondly my suggestion is related to inviting media to committee meetings. I feel we should invite a few media representatives to the committee meeting. These reporters can then go back and share the information with the entire network of media.

Answer**Mr. G.C. Malhotra**

Former Secretary General, Indian Lok Sabha

I would like to explain the system in my country through which the media connects with the Parliament. In Pakistan only the public sector media is allowed to cover the proceedings of the House. In India as I described earlier, we have two special TV channels covering the sessions of the upper and lower Houses of Parliament from 11 am to 7 pm. Other TV networks can get these recordings from the official TV channels by either making a payment which has been mutually fixed or getting 30 bite clips free of charge.

We also have a press and public relations wing which has the responsibility of liaising with the media, both private and public. The committee staff only has to tell the press officer the time and date of the meeting and provide any information related to their meetings. It is the job of the press officer to take care of all other arrangements related to the media. The budget of this wing is also separate and not part of the committee budget.

Answer**Mr. Raja Muhammad Amin**

Secretary Senate

In my opinion you have made a very important point. In our Parliament we used to have the system of having a press relation officer from the press information department attached to the committees to assist in highlighting the proceedings in the media. But now since some time committee staff themselves prepare the press releases and send them to the media. I think we should also have a media wing in our Parliament.

Comment**Mr. G.C. Malhotra**

Former Secretary General, Indian Lok Sabha

I think this wing should also have a separate budget and powers to use the budget in carrying out their work.

Answer**Mr. Syed Talat Hussain**

Director News and Current Affairs, Aaj TV

In our country basically information is divided into three parts. One is bland information, bland information is shared information. It is the information which has already reached the public and thus has lost its news value. Proceedings of Parliament or proceedings of the committees, even though they are in the category of bland information are still very important to us as we do not have access to them. We spend a lot of time and effort and then we get this footage from PTV. At the moment this pooled information is alright but in the long run pooled information is not good enough and we will not be interested in it, as it may not be objective information on an issue.

Second category belongs to interesting information. Interesting information includes debates of the committees, recommendations of the committee etc. If pooled information also includes interesting information then we can use that also. Third type of information in which media is very interested is exclusive information. Media is always chasing exclusive information as it is not easy to access due to rules or procedures or some other reason. This information generally does leak out somehow, or it is bought and at times even given by someone. No matter how, the media is always looking for such information. Although pooled information is useful to use as a base in reporting, the real impact will be created once you have interesting information and you share the committee reports, proceedings, recommendations as these affect people's welfare. We would be very interested in knowing when any institutionalised system is set up for receiving such information.

Question**Senator Razina Alam Khan**

PML

I am chairperson of Standing Committee on Education Science and Technology. I want to clear two things with relation to media. You have talked of in-camera and open meetings. Although we do not call the press to our committee meetings, we do send them our press releases soon after the meeting has finished. Could you clarify if our meetings are in-camera or open? I feel our press releases

do not do justice to all the discussions held in the meeting. In this way many facets of the issue under discussion do not get highlighted in the press and the information does not reach the public. Can we, with the permission of the Chairman invite journalists to our meetings?

Answer**Mr. G.C. Malhotra**

Former Secretary General, Indian Lok Sabha

You have raised two most important points. In the context of Lok Sabha, proceedings of in-camera committee meetings are secret and no press releases are issued after the meetings. The reports of the committee are only made public once the House has seen them. As I noted earlier sometimes the committee chair can issue a brief press release with the permission of the Speaker of the House. But this is only in 5 to 10 per cent of cases. In 90 to 95 percent of cases the report remains confidential.

I am not aware whether press release after committee meetings is permissible under rules of the National Assembly or Senate of Pakistan.

Comment**Ms. Mehnaz Raffi**

MNA, PML

Only those committee reports which relate to bills and legislation are discussed on the floor of the House. Other reports prepared by committees are not discussed in the House. In the last four years I have never listened to a discussion of a committee report in the House.

Answer**Mr. Raja Muhammad Amin**

Secretary, Senate

There are two possibilities. Committees examine issues either by these being referred to them by the House or the committee taking suo moto notice of any issue of national importance. Under the rules committee chairs can brief the press on the proceedings of the committee in both instances, whether the issue has been sent to the committee by the House or if it has been taken up by the committee on its own.

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Question**Ms. Mehnaz Raffi**

MNA, PML

Recently we gave a bill for change in citizen's act and send it to the government for review. The government send the bill back with their comments. In the meantime the information was leaked to the press and they called me and told me that the bill has been rejected. I explained to them that the fate of the bill is decided in the House and it cannot be decided by the committee. I want to stress that the information of committee proceedings does generally leak out and it is impossible to keep the proceedings secret. Then what is the need of having in-camera committee meetings?

Answer**Mr. G.C. Malhotra**

Former Secretary General, Indian Lok Sabha

Once committee reports are presented in the House they are treated in different ways in India, Pakistan and England. In Pakistan the committee chair can decide if she/he wants to keep the proceedings secret or if she/he wants to share it with the public. The chairperson of the committee does not need permission from the Speaker of the House. In India the chairperson needs permission of the Speaker before he/she can give a press release to the media. In Pakistan, the chairperson of the committee can move a motion in the House for discussing the report, whereas we do not have such powers in India.

The reports which are prepared in committees on a consensus basis have a very high acceptability and thus when they are presented in the House they are accepted without any discussion. There is no bar on discussion but the practice is that the reports are not discussed.

The reports which relate to bills are of two types. You have bills which are reviewed by the 24 Departmentally Related Standing Committees. These are joint committees of both the Houses. Each has a membership of 21 members from Lok Sabha and 10 members from Rajya Sabha. Each committee has exclusive staff of 5 to 8 officers who provide research and other support to the committees. We also have the Library and Reference, Research, Documentation and Information Service-LARRDIS which provides additional research support to the committees on request. Each year when budget is presented these 24 DRSCs divide

into 24 groups with each member at least on one committee and no member on more than one committee and examine the demand for grants for a month and present their report after one month. Reports on bills referred to the DRSCs are also discussed in the House.

We also have select committees which are constituted to examine a particular bill. The bills are modified in the committees and then presented in the House on which discussion then takes place.

In England committee reports are not presented in the House at all. Notice of the report is tagged to the weekly bulletin saying that the committee has finalised its report along with the name of the committee and the title of the report. Subsequently, if a matter related to the topic of the report comes up for discussion in the House, the report is tagged to the papers of the motion and in this way is available to be considered when the subject is under discussion. Thus in England there is no scope for presentation or discussion of report in the House.

Question**Mr. Ahmed Bilal Mehboob**

Executive Director, PILDAT

I am happy that you touched the topic of the budget process in the Lok Sabha. That is very useful because we have our budget session in June. We also are holding a separate session in June for our parliamentarians on this subject. But as you are present here, could you briefly comment on your budget process? What is the total period for that and what is the role of committees in the budget process? Can you or someone from the National Assembly or Senate Secretariat staff enlighten us on whether the National Assembly rules of procedures bar the committees from playing a role in the budget process?

Answer**Mr. Muhammed Mushtaq**

Deputy Secretary, National Assembly

The rules of Procedure of the National Assembly say "Every bill other than finance bill shall stand referred to its standing committee upon its instructions". Thus the rules do not have any provision for committees to participate in the budget process.

Answer**Mr. Raja Muhammad Amin**

Secretary, Senate

Referring to the Senate, the finance bill does not come to the Senate. But according to the recent amendment, discussion on the finance bill and on other money bills has been allowed. Recommendations are given but authority to pass the bill is with the National Assembly.

Answer**Mr. G.C. Malhotra**

Former Secretary General, Indian Lok Sabha

I will explain the budget process in Parliament in my country. On 28 February every year, at 11 am the budget for the next year is presented in the House. The Finance Minister presents the budget and at the end of his hour long speech he makes a one minute statement saying " Mr. Speaker with your permission I lay the Finance Bill before the House" and the bill becomes effective immediately. This is a departure from the normal rules, in which the provisions of a bill do not become effective until the bill has been considered and passed in both the Houses and assented to by the President. In the case of the Finance Bill we have a special provision under our rules which allow the bill to become effective when it is near to presentation in the House and these provisions allow the bill to remain effective for 75 days only. There is a general discussion on the bill for about 8 to 10 days in the House and other discussions are also held in the House for another 10 to 15 days. Thus after 20 to 25 days the House adjourns for a month and the 24 DRSCs break into 24 groups and examine the demand for grants for their related ministries and present their reports to the House. The committee meetings are attended by Secretaries of the related Ministries, and normally no junior government officials are allowed to take part in these discussions. Generally around 7 to 9 meetings are held during this 30 day period. As I mentioned earlier 16 DRSCs are managed by the House and 8 are managed by the Senate. Thus reports of 16 committees are presented in the House and lay before the Senate and 8 committee reports are first presented in the Senate and lay before the House. The recommendations of the reports of these committees are incorporated in the final budget document and the budget is passed by the House. As the Finance Bill becomes ineffective on the 76th day, it is mandatory for the committees to present their reports to the House after a

month so that there is time for discussions and subsequent passing of the bill before the 75 day period ends.

After the reports are presented in the House the Business Advisory Committee which is chaired by the Speaker and all leaders of political parties are its members, select around 5 to 7 reports from the total number of reports presented in the House. Detail discussions are then held usually for about 10 to 15 days on the demand for grants presented in these selected reports and then the recommendations of these reports are voted on by the full House. Voting on the remaining reports takes place together on one day which is called the "Guillotine Day". There is no detail discussion held on these reports.

The next bill to be reviewed is the Appropriation Bill which looks at appropriating the money out of the consolidated fund of India. We have a provision under our constitution which says that no money can be withdrawn by the executive without the specific approval of the Parliament. Discussion is held for 1 or 2 days and then the appropriations recommended under the demand for grants are passed by the Lok Sabha and then by the Rajya Sabha.

The Finance Bill is the next bill which comes up for discussion in the House. Discussion on the Finance Bill is held in the plenary House only after which the Finance Bill is passed. There is no provision in our rules for the Finance Bill to be sent to the committees for discussion, as is the case in Pakistan also. The Appropriation Bill to get money for spending over the next year and the finance bill to impose taxation proposals. With the passing of the Appropriations Bill and the Finance Bill the budget is deemed to have passed.

Question**Mr. Ahmed Bilal Mehboob**

Executive Director, PILDAT

What is an estimates committee?

Answer**Mr. G.C. Malhotra**

Former Secretary General, Indian Lok Sabha

In India we have three important financial committees. First, there is the Public Accounts Committee, which works mainly on the audit paragraphs of the Auditor General's report. I will explain in the next session how the PAC has

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plugged loopholes in the law through its review process. The function of the estimates committee was to take estimates from the Ministries for the preparation of the budget each year. The area of work of Estimate Committee has now been taken over by the 24 Departmentally Related Standing Committees, which were set up in 1993 only. But even now the Estimates Committee does prepare its own estimates for the budget, with the result that there is overlapping of recommendations made by the DRSCs and the Estimate Committee. Many people feel that the Estimates Committee needs to close down.

First we had only 3 standing committees then the number grew to 17 and then we reached the current number of 24 committees. It took us many years to reach this stage. Before the DRSCs were set up we basically had three types of committees in our country. First, we had informal consultative committees. It has taken us over 40 years to evolve to the present committee system in our country. In India we now have 55 committees in Parliament, along with 4 select committees bringing the total to 59 committees. I see that in Pakistan also you have a lot of committees in both the Houses, no less than the number we have in India. I feel that the number of committees should be pruned, but it seems difficult to achieve.

Question

Ms. Mehnaz Raffi

MNA, PML

Previously the budget was not referred to the committees for discussion in India. Is the new system of examination of the demand for grants by the 24 DRSCs having a positive impact on the formulation of the budget?

Answer

Mr. G.C. Malhotra

Former Secretary General, Indian Lok Sabha

This is a very good question. Yes it does impact positively on the budget formulation, but it also has its constraints. The constraint is that the recommendations made by these 24 committees are not made effective in the budget for the coming year. They only get implemented in the supplementary budget or in the budget presented next year. Thus a system is in place in which recommendations made by any standing committee are implemented only at the time of the presentation of the budget next year and sometimes in the supplementary budget.

Question

Mr. Ahmed Bilal Mehboob

Executive Director, PILDAT

Is there any system in India which provides for the input of parliamentarians in the budget process before the budget is presented in the House?

Answer

Mr. G.C. Malhotra

Former Secretary General, Indian Lok Sabha

There is no specific provision in the rules which provides for the participation of the parliamentarians in the pre-budget presentation process. However, generally the Finance Minister does take informal feedback from the consultative committees and can use it if he wants. As the budget is a secret document till the time it is presented in the House, the details of the bill are not revealed even to the committee members. Once, information leaked out in England on the price of cigarettes being raised in the budget. As a result of the leak the Minister concerned had to resign from his post.

Question

Ms. Mehnaz Raffi

MNA, PML

In Pakistan many important items are not even included in the budget. Does this also happen in India?

Answer

Mr. G.C. Malhotra

Former Secretary General, Indian Lok Sabha

Yes, sometimes the government does make decisions on taxation etc and makes appropriations before the presentation of the budget in Parliament.

Question

Ms. Mehnaz Raffi

MNA, PML

In Pakistan we have government bodies like the electricity regulatory authority, whose budget is not part of the budget process. Do you have any such systems in India? How is the defence budget presented in India? Is there any secrecy about defence budget?

Answer**Mr. G.C. Malhotra**

Former Secretary General, Indian Lok Sabha

No we do not have any expenses kept out of the budget document. There is no secrecy on items related to the defence budget. In some cases, the Finance Minister can request expenses related to a certain item to be kept secret.

Question**Mr. Qamar Sohail Lodhi**

Deputy Secretary, National Assembly

Are the amendments suggested by the committees to the finance bill accepted by the government?

Answer**Mr. G.C. Malhotra**

Former Secretary General, Indian Lok Sabha

Recommendations from the opposition are generally not accepted. However government does bring about amendments and modifies the finance bill if lobbyists and other groups pressurise the government to make certain changes. These amendments are adjusted after the 75 day period has passed.

Question**Mr. Sharafat Hussain Niazi**

Deputy Secretary, Senate

The Senate is given 7 days to make recommendations on the Finance Bill. Of these 7 days 2 days are given to members for general discussion, then bill is passed to the Committee on Finance, which deliberates on it for another 2 days. Finally it is reviewed on the floor by all the members, after which the final recommendations are sent back to the National Assembly. What is the system in India?

Answer**Mr. G.C. Malhotra**

Former Secretary General, Indian Lok Sabha

The Senate in India also does not have any powers to make any amendments to the Finance Bill. Although the Senate has 14 days to give their recommendations on these bills, they usually review it in one day and send it back to the Lok

Sabha. This is done as they know that the Senate really has no powers to affect changes in the budget, thus they do not spend too much time on discussion. Also, as members of the Senate are members of the standing committees which examine the government proposals, they have already provided their inputs to the documents and do not need to make any further suggestions.

Question**Mr. Mehboob Ali**

Deputy Secretary, Senate

Do all your 24 standing committees have separate staff assigned to them? What do you do when government officials refuse to or do not attend committee meetings?

Answer**Mr. G.C. Malhotra**

Former Secretary General, Indian Lok Sabha

Every committee has its own exclusive staff of around 5 to 8 up to the level of deputy secretary assigned to it. Beyond that a joint secretary looks after 4 to 5 committees and the secretary is responsible to all the committees.

In our system there is no question of the government officials refusing to attend committee meetings. It is a breach of privilege not to attend the meetings. Thus we have never given thought to what should be done if they do not attend.

Session 2.

Empowering Committees and Women Committee Chairs with the help of linkages to Civil Society, Research Organisations and Media

Mr. G.C. Malhotra

Former Secretary General, Indian Lok Sabha

Mr. G.C. Malhotra began his talk by saying that he had gained a lot of knowledge on parliamentary practices and procedures by being associated with parliamentarians and political leaders in Pakistan and in India and also by his long term association of over 40 years with the institution of the Parliament. He said that his talk would focus on providing an overview of the committee system and using research institutions and civil society organisations to enhance effectiveness of committees.

Explaining why we have committees in Parliament, Mr. Malhotra said that a lot of Parliament's business is carried out through committees. Committees are an extension of the House. He said that in United States they are known as little legislatures and other countries refer to them as mini parliaments. The importance of the committees lies in the fact that they are a creation of the House and are equally important as the House, said Mr. Malhotra. Committees assist the House to find facts, to examine witnesses and to sift evidence. House cannot do all this work on its own. Mr.

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Malhotra pointed out that it was not possible for a House of 545 or 342 members to question witnesses. He stated that this can be effectively undertaken in a committee which has a membership of 15 to 31 parliamentarians, of which generally 50 percent attend a meeting each time. The work which the House cannot do itself is given to the committees, he explained.

Mr. Malhotra noted that the non-partisan nature of the committee is also an important aspect of the committee system. Work in committees is undertaken through consensus among the members and in this way the reports and recommendations of committees have a higher acceptance as they represent views of all parties. He said that it is also important that members of the committee and staff work in unison and cooperation with each other without which a committee would be a body that just keeps minutes and wastes hours. He said that Mr K.C. Whare has very aptly stated that in committees “there comes out unity out of plurality, direction out of confusion and decision out of discussion”. In committees, members get the opportunity to bargain, discuss and adjust their views which they cannot do in the plenary House, he said.

Pointing to other advantages of committee system in Parliament, Mr. Malhotra said that committees help to increase the amount of time that is spent on enacting legislation. He explained that on an average the Lok Sabha meets 80 to 85 days throughout the year. He said that these days about 48 to 50 percent of the time of the House is spent on redressing grievances through questions, call attention, motions, zero hour etc, with only 16 per cent of the time left for legislation. The main function of legislators is ignored, and some time bills are passed without discussion due to lack of time. Committees take over the work related to legislation and ease the burden of the House. They spend a lot of quality time debating and discussing the bill. In this way the time spent on legislation increases significantly. According to Mr. Malhotra the time spent on legislation increases two and a half times. As a result the time spent on the budget and legislation in the house also rises.

Highlighting other advantages of parliamentary committees, Mr. Malhotra said that in committees a distinct committee view emerges in the form of consensus reports and bi-partisan approach adopted by members as opposed to party views which are generally endorsed in the plenary House.

Mr. Malhotra said that the expertise members bring to each committee enhances the importance of a committee. Members are placed in committees according to the areas in which they have knowledge and experience. He said that due to this base of knowledge members are able to contribute more effectively in deliberations on issues that are presented to the committees. This expertise is then transferred to the floor of the House and the member can more effectively take part in debates in the House and raise questions and improve his/her performance as a legislator.

Mr. Malhotra said that committees offer a great opportunity for backbenchers to gain expertise in a specific issue. They can develop this expertise as committee members and then use these skills and knowledge to get the opportunity to speak in the House. Mr. Malhotra explained that generally backbenchers do not get the chance to speak on the floor of the House as most of the time is used by the Ministers or the treasury benches or more prominent leaders. According to Mr. Malhotra in each calendar year most members get only one hour to speak in the House. He said that backbenchers may not even get the opportunity to speak at all. They can take advantage of the committee system and focus on developing their skills so that they can use the experience gained in the committees to their advantage in the House. He said this would also help them in gaining recognition from their party leaders.

Mr. Malhotra pointed out that the in-camera meetings of parliamentary committees are seen by some as a disadvantage of the committee system. As meetings are not open to the media, members do not take too much interest in attending. He said that as many MPs are keen to be covered by the media in the papers and on TV, the absence of the reporters reduces their level of interest to attend meetings.

Referring to the role played by committees in the budgetary process, Mr. Malhotra highlighted that the recommendations made by the various committees on the demand for grants, when incorporated in the budget next year will contribute to making this budget more realistic and needs-based. As these recommendations are representative of the interests of the public. This he said was a very important contribution of the parliamentary committees. He reiterated that to be an effective committee member you had to be an effective legislator.

Mr. Malhotra went on to describe the four major variants of

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committees generally seen around the world. He said the strongest variant is the committee system in USA. Committees in the United States are very powerful. He said that former United States President Woodrow Wilson has rightly sated "Congress in session is Congress in exhibition while congress in committees is congress at work". He said that in the USA for every department of the government there is a corresponding congressional committee. He said that importance of committees is reflected in their being seen as a parallel government. Mr. Malhotra said selection for chairpersonship of a committee is based on the seniority of the member in a particular committee. Chairmanship will be given to a member who has been a member of the particular committee for the longest number of years. Thus even if another member has been in congress for 25 years, but has only three years in a certain committee, the chair will go to the committee member who has been a member of this committee for a longer term than three years, even though he may not be a member of Congress for 25 years. Mr. Malhotra explained that members are encouraged to stay in one committee and develop their expertise in a specific area rather than frequently changing committee membership. He said that this system was different to the selection or election of a committee chair in Pakistan and in India. Mr. Malhotra said that in both India and Pakistan committee chairs are not elected or nominated by their seniority as a committee member. In Pakistan as there is proportional representation system in selecting committee members according to the number of seats held in the House, the government party having more members than opposition also elects a member from their party to be the chairperson. However, Mr. Malhotra noted that in India committee members and chairs are nominated by the party leaders through a mutually agreed informal arrangement, which does allow for opposition members to be committee chairs.

Mr. Malhotra went on to describe the committee system of the countries of the former Soviet Union. He said that the plenary House meets only for a short while to legislate policy. He said that the day to day work was undertaken in the committees.

Mr. Malhotra said the third system is the continental system of Western Europe including France, Italy etc. where committees also play an important role with slight variations in different countries.

He said that Pakistan and India follow the commonwealth

committee system. He said that in the earlier session he has already referred to some of these committees. There is a growing trend to have subject or departmentally related committees in Parliament as seen in the UK, Australia, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Canada, Kenya, Sri Lanka, and even in emerging democracies like Ethiopia and Maldives, he said. Mr. Malhotra opined that the number of committees is increasing all over the world.

Mr. Malhotra stated that in India there are a total 59 committees, of which 24 are Departmentally Related Standing Committees, 7 are other joint committees, 12 are single house committees in Lok Sabha and 12 in Rajya Sabha and 4 are ad hoc committees. He said that in addition to these there are 30 consultative committees which are constituted by the Ministers to get feedback on their views and also to give them information on implementation of development schemes etc. There are also 56 government bodies of which MPs are members. These two types of committees are not related to the parliament secretariat, he said.

Commenting on the different committees he said that there are three very important finance committees i.e Public Accounts Committee, Committee for Public Undertaking and Estimates Committee. These three committees together keep an unremitting vigil over government spending and performance, bring to light inefficiencies, waste and indiscretion in the implementation of policies. The relentless crusade of the financial committees keeps the administration on its toes and secures its accountability to Parliament, said Mr. Malhotra. Single house committees include Business Advisory Committee, Committee on Government Assurances, Committee on Private Member's Bills, Committee on Privileges etc, he said.

Elaborating on the follow-up to the recommendations made by the parliamentary committees, Mr. Malhotra said that the committee report is sent to the related government department with a request for the government to respond in 90 days. If they cannot meet this deadline they need to get permission from the committee chairperson, which is generally only granted in special cases. The government is thus duty bound to send its response within the 90 day period, he said. Explaining the system of response to the recommendations of the committee, Mr. Malhotra said that the government response is made in the form of action taken replies, which divide responses to the recommendations of the committee in four categories.

These include recommendations that they accept, those that they need more time on, those that they request the committee to drop as these are already enforced and those on which they disagree. He said that 60 per cent of the recommendations are generally accepted by the government, on 10 to 15 per cent more time is requested, and on 15 to 20 per cent government does not agree. He said that either the committee agrees with the logic of the government on why it disagrees or it reiterates its recommendations and presents the report in the House. Mr. Malhotra stressed that the role of the House ends there. However, he said that the government has to respond to the committee again, either by agreeing or disagreeing. If the government disagrees then the committee has to accept the decision as the government has the last word.

Mr. Malhotra pointed out that the current Speaker of the Lok Sabha has introduced a new system of reporting regarding the recommendations of the committee, in which the Minister of the related department has to report to the House on the status of implementation on the recommendations of the committee.

Referring to the functions of DRSCs Mr. Malhotra said that they perform four functions. The first function pertains to the examination of the demands for grants at the time of the presentation of the budget each year. He said that the committee members spend one month in reviewing these and present their recommendations in their report, on the basis of which the budget is passed. Mr. Malhotra explained that in the remaining 11 months, these committees review the bills that are referred to them by the House. He said that the number of bills referred to these committees is steadily increasing. Almost all bills put in the House are referred to the DRSCs. He said that in some cases when there is rush to pass the bill, it may not be sent to the committee and passed by the House. The third function of these committees is to review long term policies of the government like defence policy, foreign policy, agricultural policy etc. and make recommendations on these policies which are taken into account prior to the finalisation of these policies, he said. Mr. Malhotra noted that the fourth function of the DRSCs is their taking suo motto notice of issues to be examined during the year. Members' contribution is crucial in selecting the topics to be taken up by the committees during the entire year. Members are aware of the more pressing concerns of their constituency and can on the basis of their assessment choose an area which needs immediate attention, Mr. Malhotra said that 10

out of 28 state legislatures in India also have DRSCs, but problems are encountered in their effective functioning. He noted that in Karnataka and Goa DRSCs were formed but had to be closed due to the increased interference of the members in the administration of the committees.

Mr. Malhotra said that each committee has its own exclusive staff of 4 to 7 individuals at the level of deputy secretary and below. These support staff provide research and administrative support to the committees. They organise meetings, handle correspondence, prepare minutes, prepare reports etc. He said that they provide very valuable assistance to the members during the scrutiny of the demand for grants, by looking at government policy, 5 year plan, annual plan and other related documents and prepare a summary brief for the members which they can use in making their recommendations to the House. They also prepare a list of questions on which the members can request a response from the government.

Mr. Malhotra said that in order to streamline the work of the committees, there is a small library set up for each committee which has required documents/ reports available close by. Every committee also has computer and internet connection facility available, as well as a local area network, which links committees with each other and with the local library and other parliamentary libraries around the world. He said through this range of connections committees are always informed of other committee activities and thus overlapping of work is avoided. Mr. Malhotra said that the Speaker also holds meetings with the chairpersons of all committees twice a year which helps to resolve the common problems.

Referring to other services available to parliamentary committees in India Mr. Malhotra said that the Library and Reference, Research Documentation and Information Service-LARRDIS of the Lok Sabha secretariat caters to the information needs of the members through 250 professional and non-professional staff. He said that this service has a state of the art library with about 14 lakh connections. Every member is provided with a computer of his choice, scanner, printer, modem, and a palm top computer, which are replaced every three years.

He said that besides LARRDIS a Member's Reference Service-MRS provides on the spot information to members on any subject related to the committee or the House. In response to members' requisitions, the subject specialist

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desks of MRS facilitate the collection and supply of the latest relevant material, factual data, statistics etc. on various legislative measures and other subjects of economic, social, political, constitutional and legal interest. Mr. Malhotra explained that these research staff carry out anticipatory research and prepare bulletins, background briefs etc which are available to committee members at all times. He said that the MRS staff are not government employees, they work as an independent service and are accountable to the Speaker of the House only.

Explaining the organisational structure of MRS, Mr. Malhotra said that it was divided into the following six functional Divisions: Research and Reference Division; Media and Research Division; Parliamentary Affairs Division; Library and Parliamentary Museum and Archives Division; Research and Documentation Division; and Library, Computerisation and Parliament Library Building. The team of officers in each Division is led by a Joint Director/Director and all the six Divisions are under the overall charge of a Joint Secretary/Additional Secretary.

Highlighting the magnitude of the reference service, Mr. Malhotra pointed out that since the service was established in 1970, the numbers of references each year have grown from 700 to 6508 in 2000. This service caters to all 775 members of both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. In the 13th Lok Sabha from 1999 to 2004 a total of 23, 101 requests for information were received, out of which 3,814 were during the intercession period, which is the period between one session and the other session, he said. In India we have three sessions, budget session, monsoon session and winter session. He pointed out that during this five year period on an average 65 references were handled each day, of these 65 % were for the same day, 30 % were for two to three days, 3 % for 3 and 4 days, and 2 % were those which needed response after 7 days.

Mr. Malhotra informed the participants that Lok Sabha services are completely automated and all information is available on the website of the Parliament of India. 12 touch screen kiosks containing the data pertaining to parliamentary debates, questions, list of business, parliamentary bulletins, committees etc. are functional at various vantage points in the parliamentary precincts, he said.

Mr. Malhotra opined that demands of MPs for reference services have increased as the number of educated

members of Parliament has increased, currently 80% of members being educated, and also because of greater exposure to media through live telecasting. He said the vast outreach of the media has been instrumental in bringing the constituents closer to the legislators and thus has also raised their expectations from their elected representatives.

He stated that the research staff, committee staff and computer centre staff, all three together work to enhance effectiveness of the committees because MPs today need to be better informed, better equipped to contribute in decision-making and to ensure executive accountability.

Mr. Malhotra believed that interaction with civil society is a vital component in the democratic process. As Parliament works to represent the interests of the public, seeking their opinion in policy making enacting legislation, addressing important national issues etc increases the credibility of this institution among the public. He said that this openness and transparency encourages public consultations and participation in the affairs of the state.

Elaborating on the interaction of civil society with parliamentary committees in India, Mr. Malhotra said that during the period 1953 to 2003, 167 joint select committees were set up and 167 bills were referred to them. Of these, 116 committees i.e 69% sought public opinion. He highlighted that in response to their advertisement for seeking opinion on these issues they received a total of 418, 972 responses from the public and 2,577 from non-governmental organisations. This meant that 3,612 responses received from the public per bill with 22 NGOs responding to each request, he said. However, he noted that public opinion is not sought on money or finance bills.

Presenting an analysis of the 83 bills referred to the DRSCs during 1993 to 2003, Mr. Malhotra stated that 5,648 individuals gave their opinion on the issue being examined by the committees and a total of 229 NGOs gave their opinion on the matter under debate. Giving an example of the gold control committee Mr. Malhotra stated that 2 lakh responses from the public were received only for this bill. Concluding his talk Mr. Malhotra said that these figures clearly show that the people do not only view policy making as a domain of the government or legislature, but they also want to actively participate in this process.

(Appendix C carries the complete text of Mr. Malhotra's paper)



Q & A / Comments

Question

Mr. Qamar Sohail Lodhi

Deputy Secretary, National Assembly

My question is that how do you inform the public on the status of implementation of the laws that have been enacted by Parliament? Is there any such system in India?

Being a judicial officer in the court, I observe that many individuals working in the area of law have inadequate knowledge on the laws in the country. Can you tell me if in India there is a parliamentary practice which provides legal education to members at the committee stage or at the stage of the passage of the bill in the House?

Answer

Mr. G.C. Malhotra

Former Secretary General, Indian Lok Sabha

In response to your first question, no there is no such system in practice in Indian Parliament. Once the bill is passed, the role of Parliament finishes and it is the responsibility of the government to disseminate information to the public related to the implementation of laws that have been enacted by Parliament.

Replying to your next question, no there is no parliamentary practice in India under which legal education is provided to MPs.

Question

Mr. Syed Iftikhar Hussain Shirazi

Deputy Secretary, Senate

What is the system of follow-up on the implementation of the committee's recommendation? Is there a separate cell in the secretariat which monitors implementation of the recommendations which have been accepted by the government?

Answer

Mr. G.C. Malhotra

Former Secretary General Indian Lok Sabha

No there is no separate cell for this. It is the responsibility of the committee staff to monitor implementation status of committee recommendations. As the staff is familiar with the details of the bill and involved in the preparation of the committee report etc, it is easy for them to monitor progress on these issues.

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Question**Mr. Mehboob Ali**

Deputy Secretary, Senate

My question is that how do you create awareness among the public on parliamentary work? What steps are taken by Parliament in relation to this?

Answer**Mr. G.C. Malhotra**

Former Secretary General, Indian Lok Sabha

There is no special system in Parliament for this purpose. Parliamentary committees seek public opinion and advice on issues which are being examined by the committees. In this the public is informed of the work of parliamentary committees.

Question**Ms. Mehnaz Raffi**

MNA, PML

Can parliamentary standing committees call anyone from the public to their meetings to give their expert opinion? Can these individuals also make a request to the committee to seek their expert advice or opinion on any matter under examination in the committee? Parliamentarians should have platforms where they can go and share their work and inform the public on their activities.

Answer**Mr. G.C. Malhotra**

Former Secretary General, Indian Lok Sabha

In India, standing committees do not have the powers to invite public to their meetings. We do have other ways in which we involve the public and seek their opinion such as through youth parliaments which educate students. Under these programmes mock parliamentary sessions are held in schools to educate students about the basic rules and practices of Parliament. We do not have any other formal system to educate the public about our work, other than by seeking their opinion or expert advice.

Question**Mr. Qamar Sohail Lodhi**

Deputy Secretary, National Assembly

Can we call civil society organisations to our standing committee meetings as an observer? Is there any provision for this?

Answer**Mr. G.C. Malhotra**

Former Secretary General, Indian Lok Sabha

Yes you can in Pakistan as in your rules it is allowed but our rules do not allow this. We need the permission of the Speaker if we want to invite anyone to our meeting. But in your country the committee chair has the power to decide if they want to hold the meeting in-camera or invite anyone to give their advice or opinion.

Question**Ms. Gul-e-Farkhanda**

MNA, PML

We do not have adequate trained staff to support us in our work and we do not have supportive facilities such as computers, internet connections. This severely constrains and hampers our work and limits our effectiveness as committee members. Can you please comment on this?

Answer**Mr. G.C. Malhotra**

Former Secretary General, Indian Lok Sabha

You have to keep trying and bringing your concerns to the notice of the Speaker.

Comment**Ms. Mehnaz Raffi**

MNA, PML

You mentioned that the Speaker holds meetings with chairpersons of standing committees every six months. But in Pakistan the Speaker has not had any meeting with committee chairs since the past four years since this Nation Assembly started functioning. We can only make our requests if we get a chance to have a meeting with the Speaker.

Question**Mr. Muhammad Mushtaq**

Deputy Secretary, National Assembly

In Pakistan committees have the power to receive and examine public petitions. In India are committees limited to receiving public petitions only on the issues which are being examined by them or can they receive these petitions on other issues as well?

Answer**Mr. G.C. Malhotra**

Former Secretary General, Indian Lok Sabha

Generally speaking, committees do not take public petitions. But in practice the petitions committee has increased its area of work with the number of petitions becoming very large, that petitions which do not meet the rigid qualifications are sent to the concerned government department which after reviewing it sends it to the related committee.

Question**Mr. Sardar Ali Haidery**

Research Officer, National Assembly

My question is to Mr Malhotra. What steps and initiatives can be taken to increase the interaction between the MPs and parliamentary staff? This closer interaction will enable the staff to better understand the needs of the MPs and result in improving the performance of the committees.

Answer**Mr. G.C. Malhotra**

Former Secretary General, Indian Lok Sabha

Best way to develop closer interaction is to make the initiative yourself and develop closer ties with the MPs. The MPs have so many demands, so you can make the effort to meet these needs. As I mentioned anticipatory research done by the reference service staff in India, you can also prepare backgrounders, information bulletins etc. for the use of the committee members in meetings, in the House and in making recommendations and preparing reports. This will help in your developing a better working relationship with the MPs.

Question**Ms. Riffat Javaid Kahlon**

MNA, PML

We had a large number of new members in this National Assembly which was elected in 2002. This was mostly due the stipulation of a graduate degree in order to contest elections and the introduction of 33% reserved seats for women. Most of these members did not have any political orientation or skills needed to effectively discharge their duties as legislators. These MPs need to build their capacity in order for them to play a more meaningful role. However four years have passed and the MPs still do not have the required facilities or information made available to them. Women MPs are flagged as being ineffective. The reason is that we are not provided with timely information. Do new members in India face the same difficulties and constraints?

Answer**Mr. G.C. Malhotra**

Former Secretary General, Indian Lok Sabha

You have a very good question. The parliamentary staff should always be keen to provide assistance to the MPs. If they work hard they will see that MPs will respond to their needs and will lead to increasing the number of staff in the secretariat. When I joined the Lok Sabha in 1970 there were only around ten staff in the secretariat. Now the number has risen to 250.

In response to your second point relating to new MPs. We make all the efforts to orient the new MP to parliamentary procedures and practices. We have facilitation centres established for them at railway stations and airports and provide transport and accommodation and have a briefing kit prepared with all relevant documentation and materials that might be needed by them. We have a series of training programmes, starting within the first 10 days to equip them with the skills and knowledge on parliamentary systems and their roles as a new MP. Sometimes we hold special trainings in different locations, to expose the MPs their varied roles. We constitute our committees in the very first session and they start working immediately.

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Comment**Ms. Mehnaz Raffi**

MNA, PML

I would like to point out that the problem in Pakistan has been the frequent change and dissolution of assemblies in the past due to which staff development and facilities have not kept pace with the needs of Parliament. It has taken two years to form standing committees in the current session of the National Assembly

Comment**Mr. Raja Muhammad Amin**

Secretary, Senate

I want to say that in the Senate we also provide a briefing kit to new Senators every three years which contain relevant documents, such as rules of procedures, salary, allowances, privileges etc. Regarding trainings of MPs, the National Assembly and Senate is starting a project in a few months for the capacity building of legislators with the support of United States Agency for International Development. Under this project a Parliamentary Institute for Legislative Strengthening - PILS will be set up for the capacity development of legislators.

Question**Ms. Nighat Paristan**

Research Officer, National Assembly

My question is that do you undertake anticipatory research on current issues and then publish this in your research periodicals?

Answer**Mr. G.C. Malhotra**

Former Secretary General, Indian Lok Sabha

We have 6 or 7 quarterly or monthly periodicals including digests, journals etc. The anticipatory references which I was referring to earlier were not these periodicals. Anticipatory research includes background notes, information bulletins, and fact sheets on current subjects. These are research documents of 15 to 20 pages published in advance with a copy available in the library for anyone who has an interest in it.

Question**Mr. Abdul Majeed Sandhu**

Deputy Secretary, National Assembly

Can provincial issues be discussed in standing committees? Can provincial government servants be called to the committee meetings?

Answer**Mr. G.C. Malhotra**

Former Secretary General, Indian Lok Sabha

Answer to your first question is no. Committees cannot examine provincial issues. Parliament is not allowed to discuss provincial matters, then how can the committees have the provision to raise provincial issues? For inviting provincial government officials you need to seek special permission from the Speaker. Generally the permission is given if the matter is not too sensitive or controversial.

Comment**Ms. Mehnaz Raffi**

MNA, PML

We had a meeting of the Committee on Government Assurances recently in which the chairperson called some officials from the provincial government. No permission was sought in this matter and the officials attended the meeting. In our rules, there is no need of taking specific permission from the Speaker in such a situation.

Answer**Mr. Mehboob Ali**

Deputy Secretary, Senate

I want to say that our constitution under article 66 allows the chairman to call the provincial government officials to the committee meetings.

Question**Mr. Muhammad Mushtaq**

Deputy Secretary, National Assembly

Do you have any institute, procedure or practice for the training of legislative drafting?

Answer**Mr. G.C. Malhotra**

Former Secretary General, Indian Lok Sabha

We have a Bureau of Parliamentary Studies and Training under the Lok Sabha Secretariat which conducts two international courses each year. One is a 14 week course on legislative drafting which has so far been attended by participants from over 60 countries since it began 40 years ago. The institute supports the costs of one participant from each country. In case of more than one, the participants have to secure their own funding. The other course is the Parliamentary Internship Programme which convenes for 12 months and provides training on parliamentary practices and procedures. We always invite participants from Pakistan and have had officials from the Punjab Assembly who attended our trainings.

Question**Mr. Syed Iftikhar Hussain Shirazi**

Deputy Secretary, Senate

Do you have your own draftsman for drafting legislation in Parliament?

Answer**Mr. G.C. Malhotra**

Former Secretary General, Indian Lok Sabha

We do not have our own draftsmen, but we do have legislative wings in which we have 30 to 40 officers working who assist the members in drafting their private bills.

Senator Kalsoom Parveen

PML

My question is related to committees. Our committee has made a number of recommendations in the past year and a half, but so far no follow-up or action has been taken on our recommendations. The Ministry has not even replied to us after receiving our report. Despite our best efforts to get a response from the Ministry officials we have had no feedback from them. I feel our efforts are a waste of time if nothing is done after we make the recommendations. Can you tell us what can be done in such a situation? How can we get our recommendations accepted and implemented?

Answer**Mr. G.C. Malhotra**

Former Secretary General, Indian Lok Sabha

You need to incorporate these provisions in the rules of procedure. In this way the government is bound to respond to you. If they do not give a response you can hold them accountable.

Question**Mr. Mehboob Ali**

Deputy Secretary, Senate

A lot of questions raised by members in the National Assembly and Senate on points of order are not answered by the concerned Ministers and thus remain unanswered. In the Lok Sabha there is a rule 377 which allows members to give their questions in writing and then these are placed before the House. Does the government respond to these questions?

Answer**Mr. G.C. Malhotra**

Former Secretary General, Indian Lok Sabha

The list of business known as the order paper is prepared by the House and all questions and motions put up by members are listed on this after going through a review process which takes about a month. Only items listed on the order paper can be discussed in the House. The only exceptions are points of order, zero hour and adjournment motions. Adjournment motions are used when there is an emergency situation and members have to bring up the issue before the House. The House thus adjourns its normal proceedings and allows the member to raise his/her question on the floor of the House without having given prior notice.

By raising a point of order, a member can also bring up a question without prior notice. Points of order can only be raised by a member if the rules of procedure of the House or constitutional provisions are being violated. The member has to specifically point out the rule or provision which has been violated when he brings up the point of order, which in over 90% of the cases a member is not able to do. This makes the point of order the most misused rule in the House. Mostly it is used to assist the Speaker in situations where the debate in the House is going against the interests

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of the government. A member can cut in through a point of order and disrupt the on-going discussion.

The third is the zero hour, an expression which was coined by the press and allows the members to raise questions on unlisted matters from 12 noon to 1 pm, by submitting their questions to the House by 10 am of the same day. The zero hour now is also held from 5:30 pm to 6 pm. These questions are scrutinised, sifted and prioritised by the Speaker and accordingly members are allowed to raise their questions on the floor of the House. However the government has no obligation to answer these queries. Under the garb of zero hour members can also seek answers from Ministries on matters related to their constituency by sending in their queries in writing. The Minister usually responds to these queries after one to two months.

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Remarks by Session Chair

Ms. Mehnaz Raffi

Member National Assembly and
Chairperson Standing Committee
on Women Development



Ms. Mehnaz Raffi lauded the role of PILDAT for arranging such a beneficial session for the women chairs and staff of parliamentary committees. She especially thanked Mr. Malhotra for sharing his vast knowledge and practical experience of parliamentary practices and systems in India. She said that Mr. Malhotra has helped the participants to develop a better understanding of many issues related to the effective performance of parliamentary committees. The course has also provided participants with an opportunity to learn from the committee systems of India, United States and the United Kingdom. She also appreciated the interest of the parliamentary staff in the course depicted by the presence of large numbers of National Assembly and Senate secretariat staff and research officers. She added that committee members can play an effective role only with the support of adequate number of trained parliamentary staff.

Concluding Remarks

Mr. Ahmed Bilal Mehboob

Executive Director, PILDAT

Mr. Ahmed Bilal Mehboob in his concluding remarks thanked Mr. Malhotra for especially travelling from New Delhi to address the participants of this course and enlightening them with his in-depth knowledge on role of committees and use of research and civil society in enhancing their effectiveness as MPs. He said he was also very thankful to Mr. Syed Talat Hussain for his invaluable contribution to make this session a useful one. He extended his thanks to Ms. Mehnaz Raffi for very ably chairing the 2nd session. He especially thanked all the members of Parliament and the parliamentary staff who participated at this session on a Sunday morning. He said he hoped that the discussion will benefit the legislators and legislative staff in better performing their duties.

Mr. Mehboob drew the attention of the participants to the draft directory of civil society organisations placed in their folders. He said that members of Parliament in Pakistan have very limited resources and research support available to assist them in their work in committees or in the House. In the light of this need, he said PILDAT has identified some CSOs related to the workings of the various government Ministries and prepared a draft directory which lists the names, area of expertise and contact details of all these organisations. This directory of CSOs is intended to aid the legislators in accessing the expertise available with these organisations. He requested the participants to give their feedback on the usefulness of such a directory so that PILDAT can publish a revised and improved version of the directory.

APPENDIX A

PROGRAMME

Programme

Sunday; May 14, 2006

ITEM	Activity/Title	Time	Speaker
1	Registration	10:00-10:10	
2	Welcome and Introduction to the Session	10:10-10:20	Mr. Ahmed Bilal Mehboob Executive Director PILDAT
3	Introduction of Participants	10:20-10:25	By each Participant
4	Session 1 Session Chair: Mr. G.C. Malhotra Former Secretary General Indian Lok Sabha		
	Media as a tool to enhance effectiveness of Parliamentary Committees	10:25-11:00	Mr. Syed Talat Hussain Director News and Current Affairs Aaj Television
	Q & A/Discussion	11:00-12:20	All Participants
5	Refreshment Break	12:20-12:30	
6	Session 2 Session Chair: Ms. Mehnaz Raffi Chairperson Standing Committee on Women Development		
	Empowering Committees and Women Committee Chairs with the help of linkages to Civil Society, Research Organisations and Media	12:30-01:05	Mr. G.C. Malhotra Former Secretary General Indian Lok Sabha
	Q & A	01:05-02:05	
	Presentation of Certificates to Participants	02:05-02:10	
	Remarks by Session Chair	02:10-02:20	
7	Lunch & End of the Course	02:20	

APPENDIX B

List and Profile of Participating Parliamentarians

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List of Participating Parliamentarians

No	Name	Designation	Constituency	Party	Province
1	Afsar Begum	MNA	NA-318	MQM	Sindh
2	Gul-e-Farkhanda	MNA	NA-320	PML	Sindh
3	Mehnaz Raffi	MNA	NA-273	PML	Punjab
4	Riffat Javaid Kahlon	MNA	NA-117	PML	Punjab
5	Razina Alam Khan	Senator		PML	Punjab
6	Rehana Yahya Baloch	Senator		PML	Balochistan
7	Kalsoom Parveen	Senator		PML	Balochistan

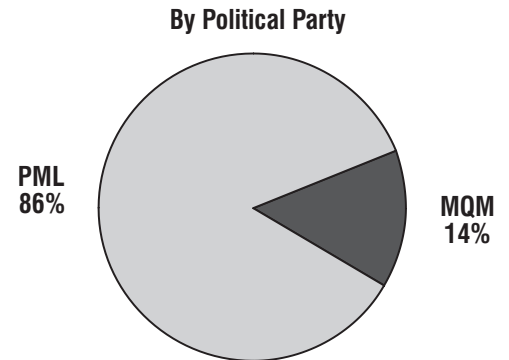
List of Participating Parliamentary Committee Staff

No	Name	Secretariat
1	Abdul Majeed Sandhu	National Assembly
2	Hammad Kazi	National Assembly
3	Mehboob Ali	National Assembly
4	Muhammad Mushtaq	National Assembly
5	Muhammad Sher Khan Baloch	National Assembly
6	Nighat Paristan	National Assembly
7	Onsia Zafar	National Assembly
8	Pervaiz Akhtar	Senate
9	Qamar Sohail Lodhi	Senate
10	Sardar Ali Haidery	Senate
11	Sharafat Hussain Niazi	Senate
12	Syed Iftikhar Hussain Shirazi	Senate

Profile of Participating Parliamentarians

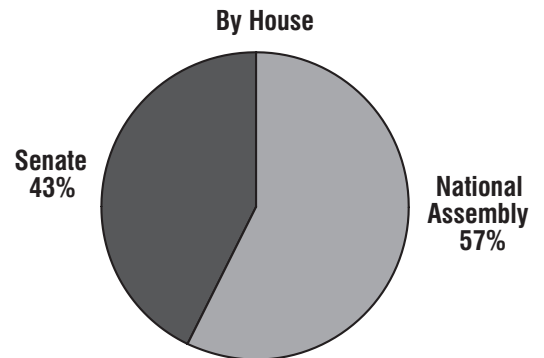
By Political Party

No	Party	Participants	Percentage
1	PML	6	86
2	MQM	1	14
Total		7	100



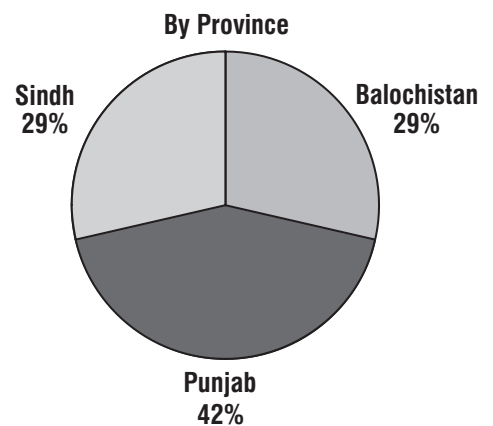
By House

No	National Assembly Senate	Participants	Percentage
1	National Assembly	4	57
2	Senate	3	43
Total		7	100



By Province

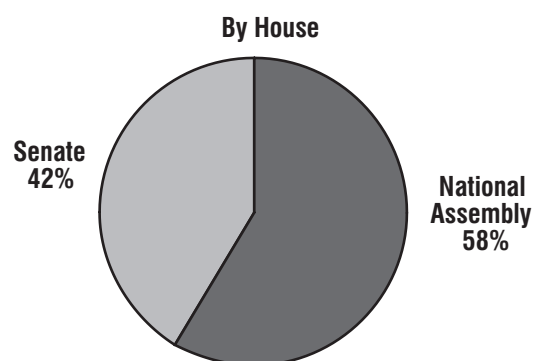
No	Province	Participants	Percentage
1	Balochistan	2	29
2	Punjab	3	42
3	Sindh	2	29
Total		7	100



Profile of Parliamentary Committee Staff

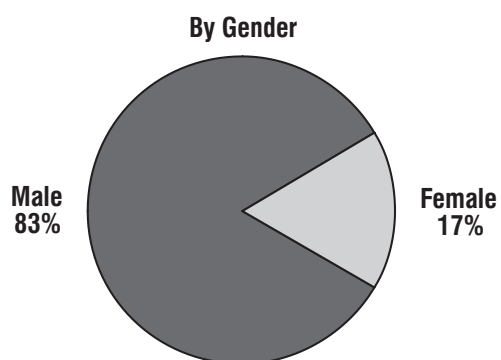
By House

No	National Assembly Senate	Participants	Percentage
1	National Assembly	7	58
2	Senate	5	42
Total		12	100



By Gender

No	National Assembly Senate	Participants	Percentage
1	Female	2	17
2	Male	10	83
Total		12	100



APPENDIX C

Paper by Mr. G.C. Malhotra

**Empowering Committee Chairs with the help of linkages to
 Civil Society, Research Organisations and Media**

Mr. G.C. Malhotra

A. COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

1. WHY COMMITTEES?

- i. To assist Plenary in transaction of parliamentary business in finding facts, examining witnesses, sifting evidence etc.;
- ii. Time of the House is limited, in general, and often too little for legislative and financial business, in particular; to make up for that shortage;
- iii. To get a distinct committee view as against party view in the plenary;
- iv. For development of expertise;
- v. To provide an effective role for the backbenchers;
- vi. To make the budget (through DRSCs) far more realistic and need based.

2. FOUR VARIANTS OF COMMITTEE SYSTEM

US, Continental, erstwhile Soviet Union and Commonwealth

3. COMMITTEE SYSTEM IN SOME FOREIGN PARLIAMENTS

a. COMMITTEE SYSTEM IN INDIA

- i. Types of committees parliamentary, consultative and governmental

Parliamentary committees ad hoc committees and standing committees;

Standing committees total number: 55; Joint: 31, Rajya Sabha: 12 and Lok Sabha: 12;

Composition membership in proportion to the party-strength in the House; every member at least on one committee; Ministers barred; chairmanship by Speaker in consultation with leaders of parties, in proportion to their strength in the House;

The three Financial Committees-Public Accounts Committee, Estimates Committee, Committee on Public Undertakings

Departmentally Related Standing Committees-24 in Union Parliament and 10 out of 28 State Legislatures;

Functions Scrutiny and examination of demands for grants; legislative proposals, long term policies, important subjects culled out from annual reports;

B. USE OF RESEARCH, MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

1. **LARRDIS**-The Library and Reference, Research, Documentation and Information Service of the Lok Sabha Secretariat

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- i. Caters to the information needs of the members;
- ii. Its Members' Reference Service supplies on-the-spot information to members from published documents;
- iii. In response to members' requisitions, the MRS facilitates the collection and supply of the latest relevant material, factual data, statistics etc. on various legislative measures and other subjects of economic, social, political, constitutional and legal interest;
- iv. It consists of about 250 professional and non-professional staff;
- v. It is divided into the following six functional Divisions : (i) Research and Reference Division; (ii) Media and Research Division; (iii) Parliamentary Affairs Division; (iv) Library and Parliamentary Museum and Archives Division; (v) Research and Documentation Division; and (vi) Library, Computerisation and Parliament Library Building;
- vi. The team of officers in each Division is led by a Joint Director/Director;
- vii. All the six Divisions are under the overall charge of a Joint Secretary/Additional Secretary;

2. COMPUTERISATION THROUGH PARLIS-Parliament Library Information System

- i. All the activities of the Lok Sabha Secretariat, including committee services, are automated;
- ii. Every member provided with a computer, data/fax modem card, scanner, printer and a palm-top computer;
- iii. Also provided free internet and email connectivity facilitating electronic mail, data bases, search and multimedia transmission, etc.; acts as a global library;
- iv. The data bases generated by PARLIS are available at Parliament of India Home Page; world-wide access to this site can be had at the internet address: <http://parliamentofindia.nic.in>;
- v. 12 'Touch Screen Kiosks' containing the data pertaining to parliamentary debates, questions, list of business, parliamentary bulletins, committees etc. are functional at various vantage points in the parliamentary precincts;

3. PRESS AND PUBLIC RELATIONS DIVISION OF Lok Sabha Secretariat

- i. Provide facilities to the media, both print and electronic;
- ii. Organize press conferences of the chairpersons of the committees after presentation of the reports in the House;
- iii. As of now, committees hold meetings in camera and not open to public and media;

4. INTERACTION WITH THE CIVIL SOCIETY BY COMMITTEES

- i. Obtain responses on a given subject from the interested parties and lobbyists;
- ii. Give advertisement in the newspapers soliciting reactions of general public on a given issue;
- ii. Take evidence of experts on the subject, with the approval of the Speaker.

5. COMMITTEE STAFF

- i. Each committee has a strength of 4 to 7 officers/staff;
- ii. The committee staff also give research inputs to the members of the committee;
- iii. For scrutiny of demands for grants, they study government policies, five-year plan documents, annual plan documents, detailed demands for grants, performance budget, comparative study of the financial and

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- physical targets for the last three years; previous years reports and action taken reports of the committee etc.;
- iv. The committee staff collect material from different sources; analyze the material; develop, with the guidance of members, questionnaire on the chosen subject; obtain written replies from the government departments; analyze the written replies, arrange
 - v. Taking of evidence by the committee; prepare supplementaries for further elucidation; only the senior-most officer of the Ministry allowed to come for evidence; government responses obtained; arrange evidence of non-official witnesses and interest groups; prepare the draft of the minutes and reports under guidance of the chairperson; language to be restrained and dignified; not to reflect on individuals; use of superlatives to be avoided; recommendations to be precise and to the point; have the report approved by the committee; presentation of the report in the House;