



THE MUN FACTORY

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RAJYA SABHA

(THE UPPER HOUSE)

DELEGATE GUIDE

AGENDA

Deliberate on Policies and Legislative Actions in India's Upper House of Parliament. Represent States. Debate with Purpose. Policy Today. Unity in Federalism. Respect Diversity. Legislate for Impact. Progress Tomorrow. Strength in Democracy.

A MODEL UNITED NATIONS SIMULATION OF THE UPPER HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT

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A note from The MUN Factory

This guide is a starting point for your journey as a Member of Parliament in the Rajya Sabha, not a substitute for independent research. Delegates are expected to study their assigned state's interests, political dynamics, and legislative priorities. Arrive with a grounded, state-accurate position to effectively deliberate on policies and legislative actions.

02 About the Rajya Sabha

Introduction

The Rajya Sabha, or the Council of States, is the Upper House of the Indian Parliament. Established under the Constitution of India, it serves as a permanent, indirectly elected body designed to represent the interests of the States and Union Territories, acting as a crucial check on the power of the popularly elected Lok Sabha (House of the People). It is a federal chamber that embodies the principle of India's bicameral legislature.

Constitutional Mandate

The Rajya Sabha's mandate is derived from the Constitution to act as a revising chamber, a guardian of federal principles, and a forum for mature deliberation on national issues. It ensures that the voices of the states are heard in the legislative process and provides a platform for experts and eminent persons to contribute to national policy-making.

Composition and Membership

- **Maximum Strength:** 250 members as per Article 80 of the Constitution.
- **Current Strength:** 245 members. Of these, 233 are representatives of the States and Union Territories (Delhi, Puducherry, and Jammu & Kashmir), and 12 are nominated by the President of India.
- **Nominated Members:** The President nominates 12 members with special knowledge or practical experience in fields such as literature, science, art, and social service.
- **Election:** Members representing states are elected by the elected members of the respective State Legislative Assemblies using the system of proportional representation by means of a single transferable vote.
- **Term:** It is a permanent body and is not subject to dissolution. One-third of its members retire every two years, ensuring continuity. Each member serves a term of six years.

Presiding Officers

- **Chairman:** The Vice-President of India is the ex-officio Chairman of the Rajya Sabha.
- **Deputy Chairman:** The Rajya Sabha elects a Deputy Chairman from amongst its members to preside in the Chairman's absence.

03 Understanding the Agenda

Definitions

- **Legislative Action:** The process of enacting, amending, or repealing laws through bills introduced and debated in Parliament. This includes both Government Bills and Private Members' Bills.
- **Policy Deliberation:** The formal discussion and scrutiny of government policies, national issues, and matters of public importance.
- **Federalism:** A system of government in which power is divided between a central authority and constituent political units (States). The Rajya Sabha is a key institution for maintaining this federal balance by representing state interests at the national level.
- **Ordinary Bill:** A bill that deals with any matter other than financial subjects. It can be introduced in either House of Parliament and requires the approval of both Houses to become law.
- **Money Bill:** A bill that exclusively deals with financial matters like taxation, expenditure, and borrowing. It can only be introduced in the Lok Sabha. The Rajya Sabha's role is limited to making recommendations within a stipulated time.
- **Resolution:** A formal expression of the opinion or will of the House on a specific matter. A special power of the Rajya Sabha is to pass a resolution by a two-thirds majority to enable Parliament to legislate on a subject in the State List.

Scope of the Agenda

This agenda tasks the Rajya Sabha with scrutinizing and deliberating on key policies and legislative actions. As the "Council of States," the House must examine how proposed laws and policies impact the federal structure and the interests of various states. Delegates are expected to analyze legislative proposals critically, understand the constitutional division of powers, and ensure that the voice of their state is represented in the legislative process.

The Importance of the Rajya Sabha

- **Federal Check:** It acts as a constitutional check on the Lok Sabha, preventing hasty or ill-considered legislation that might undermine state interests.
- **Revising Chamber:** It provides a forum for a second look at legislation passed by the Lok Sabha, offering expert and considered amendments.
- **Forum for Experts:** The presence of nominated members with expertise allows for technically sound debate on complex issues.
- **Symbol Against Majoritarianism:** The Rajya Sabha protects the values of the Constitution and prevents the tyranny of the majority in the lower house.

Why the Rajya Sabha Matters Today

- **Debate on Federalism:** With increasing debates on Centre-state relations, the Rajya Sabha's role as a representative of states has never been more critical.
- **Legislative Efficiency:** The government's legislative agenda often faces hurdles in the Rajya Sabha, making it a key arena for political negotiation and consensus-building.
- **Delimitation and Representation:** Upcoming delimitation exercises raise questions about the balance of power between states, an issue central to the Rajya Sabha's mandate.

04 Historical Background & Constitutional Foundation

Evolution of the Second Chamber in India

The idea of a second chamber in India was influenced by British parliamentary practice and the federal systems of other countries. The Government of India Act, 1935 provided for a bicameral legislature at the Centre, which became a precursor to the Rajya Sabha. The Constituent Assembly debated the necessity of a second chamber to balance the directly elected Lok Sabha and represent the princely states and provinces.

Constitutional Foundation

- **Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's Vision:** Ambedkar viewed the Rajya Sabha as a “revising chamber” and a “check” on the lower house. It was seen as a stabilising influence in the parliamentary system.
- **Federal Character:** Articles 80 to 82 define its composition, while Articles 249 and 312 grant it special powers to legislate on state subjects and create All India Services, cementing its federal character.
- **Non-Dissolution:** Unlike the Lok Sabha, the Rajya Sabha is a permanent body, which ensures continuity and stability in the legislative process.

Key Milestones

- **1952:** The first Rajya Sabha was constituted after the first general elections. This established the bicameral legislature as a functioning reality.
- **1969:** The office of the Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha was formally recognized.
- **2003:** Amendments to the Representation of the People Act altered the “domicile” requirement for candidates for Rajya Sabha, sparking debate over state representation.
- **Recent Debates:** In the current political context, with coalition politics and debates on issues like the Women’s Reservation Bill and the Jan Vishwas Bill, the Rajya Sabha’s role has been highly prominent.

Timeline of Major Events

Year	Event
1952	The first Rajya Sabha was constituted after the first general elections, establishing the bicameral legislature as a functioning reality.
1969	The office of the Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha was formally recognized.
1999	The Kargil War highlighted the Rajya Sabha’s potential — and its underutilization — as a forum for national consensus-building on security issues.
2003	Amendments to the Representation of the People Act altered the “domicile” requirement for Rajya Sabha candidates, sparking debate over state representation.
2024–2026	Coalition politics and debates on issues like the Women’s Reservation Bill and the Jan Vishwas Bill have kept the Rajya Sabha’s role highly prominent.

05 Current Political & Legislative Situation

The Numbers at a Glance

245 Current strength of the House	233 State & UT representatives	12 Members nominated by the President
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- **Ruling Party/Coalition:** The composition of the Rajya Sabha is often a mix of the ruling coalition and the opposition. As of 2026, the ruling coalition is in a position where it needs to negotiate for support on key legislations.
- **Recent Legislative Action:** The Monsoon Session of 2026 is set to be busy, with the government planning to introduce bills on topics like judicial reforms, taxation, MSMEs, and amendments to laws on national honour.
- **Private Members' Bills:** The Rajya Sabha is also a forum for Private Members' legislation, with MPs introducing bills on critical issues like airline passengers' rights, educational consultancies, small claims courts, and infrastructure accountability.

Key Political and Legislative Issues

- **The Women's Reservation Bill (Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam):** This bill aims to provide 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies and has been a subject of extensive debate in the Rajya Sabha.
- **The Delimitation Debate:** The upcoming delimitation exercise based on the census poses a significant challenge to the federal balance, with southern states fearing a loss of representation. There are calls for reforming the Rajya Sabha to ensure all states have an equal voice, although this proposal is deeply complex.
- **Push for Legislative Reform:** There is a noticeable trend toward "trust-based governance," as seen in the Jan Vishwas Bill which decriminalised numerous minor offences. The government is also pushing for other significant reforms.
- **Powers of the Rajya Sabha:** There are ongoing debates about the effectiveness of the Rajya Sabha, including proposals to strengthen its role in financial matters and its capacity to deliberate on federal concerns.

06 Powers and Functions of the Rajya Sabha

The Rajya Sabha is a powerful and integral part of the Indian Parliament, wielding significant authority across various domains. Its powers are a blend of equality with and subordination to the Lok Sabha in certain matters, alongside exclusive powers unique to it.

1. Legislative Powers

- **Ordinary Bills:** It enjoys equal powers with the Lok Sabha. An ordinary bill can originate in either house and must be passed by both to become law.
- **Deadlock Resolution:** In case of a deadlock over an ordinary bill, the President can convene a joint sitting of both Houses. Given the Lok Sabha's larger numbers, the Rajya Sabha's views can be overruled.
- **Money Bills:** It has limited powers. Money Bills can only be introduced in the Lok Sabha. The Rajya Sabha cannot amend them, only make recommendations, which the Lok Sabha may or may not accept. The Rajya Sabha has 14 days to return the bill.

2. Financial Powers

- **Weak House:** In financial matters, the Rajya Sabha is a weaker house. It cannot introduce or reject a Money Bill. It can only make recommendations and its power is largely recommendatory. This has been a point of contention for those seeking to strengthen the House.

3. Executive Powers

- **Control over Government:** While the Council of Ministers is collectively responsible to the Lok Sabha, the Rajya Sabha can exercise control over the executive by critiquing policies, asking questions, and moving motions.

4. Electoral Powers

- **President and Vice-President:** The elected members of the Rajya Sabha, along with the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, elect the President of India. They also form the electoral college to elect the Vice-President.

5. Judicial Powers

- **Impeachment:** Along with the Lok Sabha, the Rajya Sabha can impeach the President. It can also initiate proceedings for the removal of judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts.

6. Exclusive (Special) Powers — powers that only the Rajya Sabha enjoys, highlighting its unique federal role:

- **Legislation on State List:** Under Article 249, it can pass a resolution by a 2/3rd majority of members present and voting, declaring it necessary for Parliament to make laws on a matter in the State List in the national interest.
- **Creation of All-India Services:** Under Article 312, it can pass a similar resolution to create one or more new All-India Services common to the Union and States.
- **Emergency Approvals:** When the Lok Sabha is dissolved, the Rajya Sabha holds the sole power to approve a Proclamation of Emergency (National, State, or Financial).

07 Key Legislative Mechanisms & Procedures

To effectively legislate and deliberate, it is crucial to understand the mechanisms and procedures of the Rajya Sabha.

The Legislative Process

- **Bills:** A legislative proposal can be introduced as either a Government Bill (by a minister) or a Private Member's Bill (by a non-minister MP).
- **Readings:** A bill must undergo three readings in each house before it can be passed.
 - **First Reading:** Introduction of the bill.
 - **Second Reading:** Detailed discussion on the bill's principles and provisions, often referred to a Parliamentary Committee for scrutiny.
 - **Third Reading:** Final debate on the bill as a whole, followed by voting.
- **Committees:** Bills are often referred to Parliamentary Committees (like the Department-Related Standing Committees or Select Committees) for detailed examination and report. This is a critical step for scrutiny, although the government's use of this mechanism has declined in recent years.

Voting and Motions

- **Voting:** Votes are taken by voice vote, division, or electronic voting.
- **Resolutions:** The Rajya Sabha can pass resolutions on various matters.
- **Special Majority:** Certain constitutional powers, like those under Article 249 and 312, require a resolution passed by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the members present and voting.

Role of Presiding Officers and Key Functionaries

- **Chairman (Vice-President):** Presides over the sessions, maintains order, and decides on the admissibility of notices, motions, and bills. The Chairman's role is crucial for the smooth conduct of business.
- **Leader of the House:** Usually a senior minister (or the Prime Minister if they are a member), responsible for coordinating government business in the House and ensuring smooth functioning.
- **Leader of the Opposition:** The leader of the largest party in opposition. This is a critical role in ensuring government accountability and providing alternative perspectives.

08 State & Bloc Positions

Positions in the Rajya Sabha are driven by a complex interplay of state interests, political party affiliations, and ideological leanings. Since it is a “Council of States,” state-specific concerns often transcend party lines.

Key State/Regional Blocs

- **The “Southern Bloc”:** States like Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana have been vocal about the potential loss of political power due to the upcoming delimitation exercise based on population. They argue they are being “punished” for successfully controlling population growth and are demanding reforms to maintain their voice in the national legislature.
- **The “Northern Bloc”:** Populous states like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Rajasthan stand to gain more seats in the Lok Sabha due to their larger populations. Their stance in the Rajya Sabha may be more aligned with supporting a proportionate representation system based on population, rather than a model of equal state representation.
- **BRICS (Bihar, Rajasthan, etc.):** These states have a critical mass of members and often coordinate on issues of federalism and resource allocation.
- **Regional Parties:** Parties from states like West Bengal (TMC), Tamil Nadu (DMK, AIADMK), Odisha (BJD), and others are fiercely protective of their state’s rights and are key players in federal negotiations.
- **Smaller States and UTs:** States with fewer seats are generally supportive of stronger international or national protections and often prioritize practical support and capacity-building over new legislation.

Political Party Blocs

- **Ruling Alliance (NDA):** With a reduced majority, the ruling alliance in the Rajya Sabha must seek consensus with other parties to pass key legislations. This has increased the bargaining power of regional parties on issues like the Women’s Reservation Bill and other reforms.
- **Opposition (INDIA Bloc):** A coalition of opposition parties, often holding a significant number of seats in the Rajya Sabha. They act as a major check on government legislation, raising concerns about federalism, minority rights, and the impact of bills on states.
- **Nominated Members:** These are independent experts who can significantly influence debates with their specialized knowledge but are not tied to a state or party directly.

09 Previous Legislative Actions & Key Debates

Understanding recent legislative actions provides context for current debates.

Important Bills and Debates in the Rajya Sabha

Year	Bill / Debate	Key Content & Outcome
2026	Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Bill	Passed by Rajya Sabha. Decriminalised minor offences to improve ease of doing business and living, amending 79 Central Acts.
2024	Women's Reservation Bill	A historic debate took place on the bill to reserve 33% of seats for women in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies. Supported by most, but with demands for further inclusions.
2024	Private Members' Bills	Introduction of bills like the Critical Infrastructure (Resilience, Protection and Accountability) Bill and Shakti Samman (Pay Equity for Women) Bill showcased the Rajya Sabha's role in agenda-setting on key issues.
2024–2026	Delimitation Debate	The issue of delimitation and its potential impact on the federal balance has been a recurring theme, with southern states voicing strong concerns.

Important Parliamentary Debates

- **Kargil War (1999):** The Rajya Sabha was seen as a potential platform for national consensus but was not utilized effectively. This raised questions about its role during national emergencies.
- **Women's Reservation Bill Discussion:** This debate highlighted the role of the Rajya Sabha as a forum for a more nuanced and reflective discussion compared to the Lok Sabha. Various MPs from different regions and parties expressed their views, making it a significant federal dialogue.

10 Questions a Resolution Should Address

A strong draft resolution for the Rajya Sabha should aim to produce actionable legislative or policy recommendations. Use these questions as a checklist while drafting operative clauses.

1. Federal Balance:

- What new mechanisms or constitutional amendments should be considered to strengthen the Rajya Sabha's role in Centre-State financial relations and address the concerns of states regarding the upcoming delimitation exercise?
- How can the Rajya Sabha be reformed to better represent the interests of all states, particularly smaller ones, to ensure "Unity in Federalism"?

2. Legislative Oversight:

- What measures can be introduced to ensure that the government refers more crucial bills to Parliamentary Committees for detailed scrutiny, restoring the effectiveness of this deliberative mechanism?
- Should the role and powers of the Rajya Sabha be enhanced in the scrutiny of Money Bills to provide a more substantial federal check on financial legislation?

3. Empowering the Upper House:

- What structural changes can be made to the anti-defection law to ensure it protects parliamentary privilege without undermining the federal character of the House?
- Should the Rajya Sabha be given a more formal role in deliberating on national security and foreign policy issues, in addition to its existing powers?

4. Legislative Agenda:

- How can the Rajya Sabha be made a more effective forum for policy deliberation, ensuring that the voices of states from all regions are heard on critical national issues, such as the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, judicial reforms, and taxation measures?

5. Procedural Reforms:

- What specific procedural reforms can be introduced to ensure the efficient and smooth conduct of business in the Rajya Sabha, without undermining the right to debate?
- How can the House better utilize the potential and skills of its Nominated Members in the legislative process?

Drafting Tip

Operative clauses should specify the "who" (e.g., the Government of India, a specific ministry, the Parliamentary Committee), "what" (e.g., a specific reform or legislative action), and "when / how" (e.g., a mechanism for review).

11 Delegate Research Guide

Use this checklist to build a complete, defensible position for your assigned state before the conference begins.

State Profile Checklist

- **Political Composition:** Which party or coalition represents the state in the Rajya Sabha? What is its relationship with the central government?
- **Key State Interests:** What are the state's primary concerns regarding agriculture, industry, water resources, education, and fiscal devolution?
- **Representation:** How many seats does the state hold in the Rajya Sabha? Is its representation commensurate with its population or development needs?
- **Stance on Federal Issues:** What is the state's position on key federal matters like the Women's Reservation Bill, delimitation, and financial devolution?
- **Specific Issues:** Has the state's leadership raised any recent demands or concerns regarding central policies (e.g., on language, culture, or economic policies)?
- **Allies/Blocs:** Which other states or political parties might be its natural allies on the Rajya Sabha floor?

Statistics to Research

- Number of Rajya Sabha seats allocated to the state.
- State's population and financial contribution to the national GDP.
- Recent bills passed by the state legislative assembly.
- Key promises made to the state in government election manifestos.

Domestic Laws & Policies

- State-level laws that might be affected by central legislation.
- The state's official language policy.
- The state's position on national policies like the National Education Policy, farm laws, etc.

Key Stakeholders, Allies, and Opponents

- **Key Stakeholders:** The state's Chief Minister, the Leader of the House (if from that state), the state's MPs, and key bureaucrats.
- **Possible Allies:** Other states with similar political dispensations, shared regional concerns, or aligned positions on the agenda.
- **Possible Opponents:** States or parties likely to resist the state's key demands, or political rivals.

12 Glossary, Official Resources & Bibliography

Glossary

- **Bicameral:** A legislature with two houses (e.g., Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha).
- **Council of Ministers:** The executive body headed by the Prime Minister, responsible for the administration of the country.
- **Eminent Persons:** Individuals with special knowledge in fields like science, art, literature, and social service, nominated to the Rajya Sabha by the President.
- **Federal Character:** The principle that power and authority in the state are divided and balanced between a central authority and constituent political units.
- **Joint Sitting:** A combined meeting of both Houses of Parliament, presided over by the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, to resolve a legislative deadlock.
- **Ordinance:** A law promulgated by the President when Parliament is not in session, which has the same force as an Act of Parliament. It must be approved by both Houses within six weeks of reassembly.
- **Proportional Representation (PR):** An electoral system where the number of seats a party wins is proportional to the number of votes it receives. The Rajya Sabha uses a Single Transferable Vote (STV) form of PR.
- **Select Committee:** A committee formed for a specific purpose, often to scrutinize a particular bill in detail.

Official Resources

- **Digital Sansad (Rajya Sabha Website):** sansad.in/rs — Official source for all parliamentary business, proceedings, and members' details.
- **Election Commission of India:** eci.gov.in — Information on the electoral process for the Rajya Sabha.
- **PRS Legislative Research:** prsindia.org — Independent and non-partisan research on legislative affairs, including bill summaries and analysis.
- **The Constitution of India:** Accessible via the Ministry of Law and Justice's website.
- **Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) PARLINE Database:** archive.ipu.org — For international standards and comparisons.

Bibliography

- **Constitutional Provisions:** Articles 80–82, 249, 312 of the Constitution of India.
- **Parliamentary Procedure:** Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Council of States (Rajya Sabha).
- **Official Reports:** Parliamentary debates (Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha proceedings), reports of various Parliamentary Committees.
- **Academic/Political Analysis:** Reports from think tanks like ORF (Observer Research Foundation) on Centre-state relations and the role of the Rajya Sabha.
- **News Media:** Reports from credible sources on current legislative sessions and political developments.

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This guide was prepared to support delegate preparation and committee research. Facts and figures were accurate at time of writing; delegates should verify the latest data and news before the conference.