



EDITORIAL: THE HINDU

GENERAL STUDIES 2: POLITY
TOPIC: DEPUTY SPEAKER

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The post of Deputy Speaker is not symbolic or optional

Context: Vacant Deputy Speaker Post in Lok Sabha

- The editorial raises concern about the continuous vacancy in the office of the Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha.
- Despite the constitutional expectation and long-standing parliamentary tradition, the Deputy Speaker has not been elected since the 17th Lok Sabha began in June 2019.
- This delay raises questions about the government's commitment to constitutional propriety and democratic accountability.

Constitutional Provision: Article 93 of the Indian Constitution

- Article 93 mandates that the Lok Sabha *shall*, as soon as may be, choose two of its members to be respectively the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker.
- The phrase "*as soon as may be*" implies an expectation of urgency, even if a specific timeframe is not mentioned.
- The provision treats the offices of Speaker and Deputy Speaker with equal constitutional importance.

Role and Importance of the Deputy Speaker

- **Presiding Authority:** The Deputy Speaker presides over Lok Sabha proceedings in the absence of the Speaker, ensuring the continuity of House functioning.
- **Impartial Arbiter:** Expected to maintain neutrality and fairness while in the Chair, irrespective of political affiliations.
- **Strengthens Legislative Oversight:** Traditionally, the post is offered to a member of the Opposition, reinforcing internal checks and democratic balance within the legislature.
- **Symbol of Bipartisanship:** The convention of offering the post to the Opposition reflects the spirit of cooperative federalism and promotes inclusive governance.

Present Issue: Long-standing Vacancy

- The Deputy Speaker post has been vacant for nearly the entire tenure of the 17th Lok Sabha.



- This is unprecedented and breaks from parliamentary convention, where the Deputy Speaker is usually elected within the first few sittings of a new Lok Sabha.
- The Opposition has accused the government of deliberately delaying the election to consolidate executive dominance over parliamentary processes.

Critical Analysis of the Issue

- **Violation of Constitutional Spirit:** Although the Constitution does not prescribe a timeline, the prolonged vacancy undermines the urgency implied by Article 93.
- **Checks and Balances Undermined:** The absence of a Deputy Speaker reduces leadership redundancy and weakens institutional mechanisms for accountability in the legislature.
- **Dangerous Precedent:** If left unaddressed, this could normalize the bypassing of critical parliamentary offices by future governments.
- **Judicial Hesitation:** Although the issue has reached the Supreme Court, the judiciary has been cautious about interfering in the procedural functioning of the legislature.

Way Forward: Reforms and Accountability

- **Institutionalising Timelines:** The Parliament should introduce a formal rule or statutory provision mandating a specific timeline (e.g., within 30 days) for the election of the Deputy Speaker after the first sitting.
- **Political Consensus Building:** Constructive dialogue between the ruling party and Opposition is essential to maintain democratic traditions and prevent such vacancies.
- **Judicial Clarification:** The Supreme Court may need to interpret the phrase “*as soon as may be*” to enforce the constitutional intent more effectively and prevent misuse.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/the-post-of-deputy-speaker-is-not-symbolic-or-optional/article69502193.ece>