



Reviving Private Members' Bills

For Prelims: [Private Member's Bills](#), [Members of Parliament](#), [Anti-Defection Law](#), [Zero Hour](#), [Question Hour](#)

For Mains: Role and significance of Private Members' Bills in Indian democracy, Institutional reforms to strengthen Parliament as a deliberative body

[Source:TH](#)

Why in News?

The Vice President of India recently described [Private Member's Bills \(PMBs\)](#) as “**far-sighted, forward-looking, and a gold mine**” for India's democracy.

- His remarks have renewed focus on the declining relevance of PMBs, which are increasingly sidelined in Parliament despite their potential to strengthen individual legislative initiative.

What are Private Member's Bills?

- **About:** PMBs are legislative proposals introduced by [Members of Parliament \(MPs\)](#) who are not Ministers (i.e., not part of the government), enabling them to raise issues and suggest laws or amendments on matters significant to their constituencies.
- **Key Features:** Only non-government MPs can introduce these bills, offering a chance for independent legislative proposals.
 - MPs can also introduce resolutions to call attention to specific matters.
- **Procedure:**
 - **Drafting and Notice:** MPs draft and submit bills with at least one month's notice.
 - **Introduction:** Bills are introduced in Parliament, followed by initial discussions.
 - **Debate:** If selected, bills are debated, typically in limited Friday afternoon sessions.
 - **Decision:** Bills may be withdrawn or proceed to a vote.
- **Decline of PMBs:** Since Independence, only **14 PMBs have been passed by both Houses** and received Presidential assent. No PMB has passed both Houses since 1970.
 - During the **17th Lok Sabha (2019-2024)**, 729 PMBs were introduced in the Lok Sabha and 705 in the Rajya Sabha, but only 2 and 14 were discussed in each House respectively.
 - In the **18th Lok Sabha (as of May 2025)**, 64 PMBs were introduced, but none discussed. In Rajya Sabha, 49 out of 82 PMBs were introduced, with only one discussed.

Public Bill vs Private Bill

Public Bill	Private Bill
1. It is introduced in the Parliament by a minister.	1. It is introduced by any member of Parliament other than a minister.
2. It reflects of the policies of the government (ruling party).	2. It reflects the stand of opposition party on public matter.
3. It has greater chance to be approved by the Parliament.	3. It has lesser chance to be approved by the Parliament.
4. Its rejection by the House amounts to the expression of want of parliamentary confidence in the government and may lead to its resignation.	4. Its rejection by the House has no implication on the parliamentary confidence in the government or its resignation.
5. Its introduction in the House requires seven days' notice.	5. Its introduction in the House requires one month's notice.
6. It is drafted by the concerned department in consultation with the law department.	6. Its drafting is the responsibility of the member concerned.

How do Private Member's Bills Empower Legislative Democracy in India?

- **Promoting Independent Thought and Legislative Innovation:** PMBs allow MPs, **regardless of party, to raise issues outside the government's agenda**, fostering innovation in legislative discourse.
 - The **'Right to Disconnect' Bill (2019)**, introduced to propose a legal right for employees to [disconnect from work after working hours](#).
 - While not passed, it sparked national debate on work-life balance and mental health, highlighting how PMBs can address **societal issues often overlooked by government legislation**.
- **Driving Social Change:** The **'Rights of Transgender Persons' Bill (2014)** was the first PMB in 40 years passed in the Rajya Sabha.
 - Though it didn't pass the Lok Sabha, it paved the way for the [Transgender Persons \(Protection of Rights\) Act, 2019](#), driving inclusivity and social justice.
- **Improving Governance:** The first Private Member's Bill passed by Parliament was the **Muslim**

Wakfs Bill, 1952, which aimed to improve the governance and administration of **Wakf properties**.

- It led to the enactment of the Waqf Act, 1954, which was later amended as the [Waqf \(Amendment\) Act, 2025](#).
- **PMBs as Catalysts for National Debate:** In 1966, after Lal Bahadur Shastri's death, H.V. Kamath, introduced a PMB to amend the Constitution, making only **Lok Sabha members eligible** for the Prime Minister's post.
 - This Bill sparked an important political discussion on the **role of the Prime Minister** and the balance of power between the **Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha**.

What are the Challenges Undermining the Relevance of Private Member's Bills?

- **Lack of Time and Attention:** Data from PRS Legislative Research shows the 17th Lok Sabha allocated only 9.08 hours to PMBs, while the Rajya Sabha spent 27.01 hours, a small fraction of total session hours.
 - **Friday scheduling** of Private Members' business limits discussion, as many MPs leave for constituencies, and sessions are often overridden by disruptions or urgent government business.
 - The decline of these bills can also be attributed to **MPs' lack of seriousness, with many skipping discussions**.
- **Structural Constraints:** The lack of a dedicated parliamentary mechanism, such as a **review committee**, hinders the scrutiny, prioritization, and timely discussion of PMBs, leading to legislative inefficiency.
 - The [Anti-Defection Law \(the Constitutional 52nd Amendment Act, 1985\)](#) limits MPs' independence if party discipline overrides individual initiative, making it difficult for MPs to introduce bills that deviate from their party's agenda.
- **Low Legislative Conversion:** Minimal PMBs reach the stage of debate or voting, reducing the incentive for MPs to engage with the process seriously.

What Reforms can Revitalize the Private Member's Bills Mechanism in India?

- **Protect Time Reserved for PMBs:** Amend the **Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business** to safeguard the Friday slot for PMBs. This time should only be overridden in cases of **national emergency**.
 - Enforce this schedule consistently to enable proper debate and passage of PMBs.
 - Additionally, rather than encroaching on time reserved for PMBs, the **government should extend parliamentary working hours**; even a modest 1-2 hour extension can enhance the efficiency of [Zero Hour](#) and [Question Hour](#) while preserving PMB discussions.
 - This reform is especially crucial with the impending [delimitation](#), which is expected to increase the number of MPs.
- **Institutional and Operational Reforms:** Establish a **PMB Review Committee** to vet proposals for constitutional validity, societal relevance, and bipartisan support.
 - Create a **fast-track process** for high-impact PMBs with substantial public and parliamentary backing.
- **Time and Format Innovations:** Slightly extend parliamentary working hours to accommodate government and private business distinctly.
 - Introduce the **UK-style Ten-Minute Rule**, allowing MPs to briefly present PMBs and opposing views within a fixed time, enhancing efficiency.
- **Encouraging Political Engagement:** Promote awareness and encourage both ruling and opposition MPs to view PMBs as tools for advocacy and grassroots responsiveness. Boost visibility through Parliament TV, bulletins, and public consultations.

Drishti Mains Question:

Despite their limited success in becoming law, Private Members' Bills are vital for democratic vibrancy in

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims

Q. With reference to the Parliament of India, consider the following statements: (2017)

1. A private member's bill is a bill presented by a Member of Parliament who is not elected but only nominated by the President of India.
2. Recently, a private member's bill has been passed in the Parliament of India for the first time in its history.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans: (d)

Exp:

- The process of law making begins with the introduction of a Bill in either House of the Parliament. A Bill can be introduced either by a Minister or a member other than a Minister. In the former case, it is called a Government Bill and in the latter case, it is known as a Private Member's Bill.
- In other words, a Private Member's Bill is introduced by any member (elected or nominated) of Parliament other than a minister. One month's notice period is required prior to its introduction. Its drafting is the sole responsibility of the member who introduces the bill. **Hence, statement 1 is not correct.**
- The first Private Member's Bill passed by parliament was the Muslim Wakfs Bill, 1952, which aimed at providing better governance and administration of Wakfs. It was passed in 1954. **Hence, statement 2 is not correct.**
- The **Rights of Transgender Persons Bill, 2014**, passed by the Rajya Sabha in 2015 became the first private member's bill to get the Rajya Sabha's approval in the last 45 years. **Therefore, option (d) is the correct answer.**