As General Elections are round the corner, we are presenting you with an article on Lok Sabha, which will provide you a detail knowledge about the Lok Sabha, The Lower House of Indian Parliament.

Parliament of India consists of two houses:

1. The Lok Sabha (House of the people)
2. The Rajya Sabha (Council of States)

The Lok Sabha (House of the People) is the lower house of the Parliament of India. Lok means "people" and Sabha means "assembly" in Sanskrit.

The maximum strength of the House envisaged by the Constitution is 552, which is made up by election of up to 530 members to represent the States, up to 20 members to represent the Union Territories and not more than two members of the Anglo-Indian Community to be nominated by the Honorable President, if, in his/her opinion, that community is not adequately represented in the House.

The total elective membership is distributed among the States in such a way that the ratio between the number of seats allotted to each State and the population of the State is, so far as practicable, the same for all States.

Lok Sabha, unless sooner dissolved, continues for 5 years from the date appointed for its first meeting and the expiration of the period of five years operates as dissolution of the House. However, while a declaration of emergency is in operation, this period may be extended by Parliament by law for a period not exceeding one year at a time and not extending, in any case, beyond a period of six months after the proclamation has ceased to operate.

Background of Lok Sabha:

The Lok Sabha was duly constituted for the first time on 17 April 1952 after the first General Elections held from 25 October 1951 to 21 February 1952. The first Session of the First Lok Sabha commenced on 13 May 1952. As many as 15 General Elections to the Lok Sabha have been held till date. The Fifteenth General Elections was held from 16 April to 13 May 2009.

Qualifications of a Member of Lok Sabha:

Article 84 Part-V of Indian Constitution sets qualifications for being a member of Lok Sabha. So, in order to become a member of Lok Sabha, following qualifications should be met.

1. He/She is a citizen of India, and makes and subscribed before some person authorized in that behalf by the Election Commission of India an oath or affirmation according to the form set out for the purpose in the Third Schedule of Indian Constitution.
2. He/She, in the case of a seat in the House of the People, should not be less than twenty-five years of age, and
3. He/She possesses such other qualifications as may be prescribed in that behalf by or under any law made by Parliament.

However, a member can be disqualified of being a member of Parliament:

1. If he/she holds office of profit;
2. If he/she is of unsound mind and stands so declared by a competent court
3. If he/she is an undischarged insolvent;
4. If he/she is not a citizen of India, or has voluntarily acquired the citizenship of a foreign State, or is under any acknowledgment of
allegiance or adherence to a foreign State;
5. If he/she is violating party discipline (as per Tenth schedule of the constitution);

Furthermore, as per article 101 (Part V - The Union) of Indian Constitution, a person cannot be:

1. a member of both Houses of Parliament and provision shall be made by Parliament by law for the vacation by a person who is chosen a member of both Houses of his seat in one House or the other.
2. a member both of Parliament and of a House of the Legislature of a State.

System of Lok Sabha Elections:

For the purpose of holding direct elections to Lok Sabha each state is divided into territorial constituencies. In this respect the constitution of India makes the following two provisions:

1. Each state is allotted a number of seats in the Lok Sabha in such a manner that the ratio between that number and its population is same for all the states of India. This provision does not apply for states having a population of less than 6 million (60 lakh)
2. Each state is divided into territorial constituencies in such a manner that the ratio between the population of each constituency and the number of seats allotted to it remain the same throughout the state

Powers of Lok Sabha:

1. Motions of no confidence against the government can only be introduced and passed in the Lok Sabha. If passed by a majority vote, the Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers resigns collectively. The Rajya Sabha has no power over such a motion, and hence no real power over the executive.
2. Money bills can only be introduced in the Lok Sabha, and upon being passed, are sent to the Rajya Sabha, where it can be deliberated on for up to 14 days. If not rejected by the Rajya Sabha, or 14 days lapse from the introduction of the bill in the Rajya Sabha without any action by the House, or recommendations made by the Rajya Sabha are not accepted by the Lok Sabha, the bill is considered passed. The budget is presented in the Lok Sabha by the Finance Minister in the name of the President of India.
3. Equal Powers with the Rajya Sabha in initiating and passing any Bill for Constitutional Amendment (by a majority of the total membership of the House and at least two-thirds majority of the members present and voting)
4. Equal Powers with the Rajya Sabha in initiating and passing a motion for the impeachment of the President (by two-thirds of the membership of the House).
5. Equal Powers with the Rajya Sabha in initiating and passing a resolution declaring war or national emergency (by two-thirds majority) or constitutional emergency (by simple majority) in a state.
6. If the Lok Sabha is dissolved before or after the declaration of a National Emergency, the Rajya Sabha becomes the sole Parliament. It cannot be dissolved. This is a limitation on the Lok Sabha. But there is a possibility that president can exceed the term to not more than 1 year under the proclamation of emergency and the same would be lowered down to six-month if the said proclamation ceases to operate.

Important Points To Remember:

1. Shri G.V. Mavalankar was the first Speaker of Lok Sabha (15 May 1952 - 27 February 1956).
2. Shri M. Ananthasayanam Ayyangar was the first Deputy Speaker of Lok Sabha (30 May 1952 - 7 March 1956).
3. Smt. Meira Kumar is the Present Speaker of the Lok Sabha.
4. Shri Kariya Munda is the Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha.
5. Shri Sushil Kumar Sambhajirao Shinde is the leader of the house in the Fifteenth Lok Sabha.
6. Smt. Sushma Swaraj is the leader of the opposition in the Lok Sabha.
7. Shri T. K. Viswanathan is the Secretary General of the Lok Sabha.
8. In the 15th Lok Sabha, two members, i.e. Smt. Ingrid Mcleod and Shri Charles Dias are the nominated members.
9. Shri Basudeb Acharia and Shri Manikrao Hodyla Gavit are the longest serving members in the Lok Sabha.
10. Normally three Sessions of the Lok Sabha are held in a year:
    1. Budget Session: February to May
    2. Autumn (Monsoon) Session: July to August
    3. Winter Session: November to December

Lok Sabha is also called the popular chamber. The Lok Sabha is composed of representatives of the people chosen by direct election on the basis of adult suffrage. That is why it is called the popular chamber.

Important Note:

1. The 16th general election will be held in nine phases, the longest election in the country’s history, from 7 April to 12 May 2014 to constitute the 16th Lok Sabha in India.
2. Voting will take place in all 543 parliamentary constituencies of India to elect Members of Parliament in the Lok Sabha.
3. The result of this election will be declared on 16 May 2014, before the 15th Lok Sabha completes its constitutional mandate on 31 May 2014.
4. According to the Election Commission of India, the electoral strength in 2014 is 81.45 crores (814.5 million), the largest in the world.
5. This also will be the longest and the costliest general election in the history of the country with the Election Commission of India estimating that the election will cost the exchequer Rs 3,500 crores, excluding the expenses incurred for security and individual political parties.

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