

6. 15-point reform charter for better functioning of Parliament

Prelims: Governance

Mains: GS-II Parliament and State legislature

Context:

- ▶▶ Our Honourable Vice President has unveiled a 15-point reform charter, while expressing severe concern over the functioning of parliamentary institutions in the country and erosion of public trust in them.
- ▶▶ The charter is expected to serve as a basis for a new political normal to enable effective functioning of Parliament and State Legislatures.
- ▶▶ He also called for a new political consciousness urging all the stakeholders to review their mindset with regard to their roles and responsibilities.

The 15-point Charter Includes:

- ▶▶ Parties need to ensure attendance of at least 50% of their legislators all through the proceedings of the Houses by adopting a roster system.
- ▶▶ Review of anti-defection law.
- ▶▶ Review of the whip system which is “stifling reasonable dissent even on non-consequential matters”. Set up special courts for time-bound adjudication of criminal complaints against legislators. Pre and post legislative impact assessment.
- ▶▶ Address problem of rising number of legislators with criminal background.
- ▶▶ Governments should be responsive to opposition and opposition to be responsible and constructive while resorting to available parliamentary instruments
- ▶▶ Consensus on the proposal for simultaneous elections.
- ▶▶ Steps should be taken for the effective functioning of the Parliamentary Committees.
- ▶▶ The representation of women in legislatures needs to be raised.

Need behind such a charter:

- ▶▶ The functioning of the parliament is heavily coming under criticism for various reasons and major issues behind them are as follows:
 - ✓ Political power continues to be a male dominated. The Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha have not seen women MPs cross the 12% mark.
 - ✓ Political parties failing to display internal democracy.
 - ✓ The number of sittings the parliament undergoes is declining gradually.
 - ✓ Parliament occupied by persistent disruptions.

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- ✓ Rising questions on the quality of debates. In 2008, for instance, 16 Bills were passed with less than 20 minutes of debate.
 - ✓ Rising number of legislatures with criminal record.
 - ✓ Rising money and muscle power in elections.
 - ✓ Legislatures displaying high degree of absenteeism.
 - ✓ Faulty 'First Past the Post (FPTP) election system.
 - ✓ There are many instruments like anti-defection law, whip issued by the political parties that are acting as hindrances for free speech of MPs.

