Our Parliament has many important functions. Among them making laws for the entire country is the most important. It also makes policies for the entire country - how to use our forests, natural resources like mines, about education, about our relations with other countries, about industries and agriculture etc. The governments are expected to implement programmes in accordance with those policies. For example, in 1986, the Parliament adopted a National Policy on Education, which till today guides the programmes relating to education. In the year 2009 the Parliament passed the ‘Right of children to free and compulsory education Act’ (or law) in order to ensure that all children get quality education.

- Find out about some important policies and laws made by the Parliament. Make a presentation about it in the class.

The government which rules the country implements the laws made by the Parliament for the development and welfare. The government has to take approval of the Parliament for its actions. While discussions are going on in the Parliament any of the members may ask questions for clarification on any of the issues and respective members from the government have to answer them. Thus the government is answerable to the Parliament. The Parliament also approves the income and expenditure of the government. Every year the government presents the annual budget for the approval of the Parliament.

- What do you think are the advantages of having a Parliamentary form of government in which the government members are answerable to the Parliament?
- Should the Parliament only make laws and not control the government in its functioning? Discuss in the class.
- Find out if there are other kinds of government where the government is not responsible to the Parliament or legislature.

The Houses of Parliament

There are two Houses of Parliament - Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. The members of the Lok Sabha are directly elected by the people while the Rajya Sabha members are elected by the members of the State Legislatures. The Rajya Sabha can have a maximum of 250 members. The state Legislative Assemblies and Union Territories elect their representatives to the Rajya Sabha.

The Constitution provides for Parliamentary form of governing the country in which the Parliament is the highest law making body. Last year we learned about the law making bodies of the state level. We saw that the Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) in each state make the laws for their state. Each State makes its own laws only on certain aspects. There are executives at the state level who implement laws and policies made by legislative houses. This year we shall study about Parliament at national level and its working.

Role of the Parliament

Among the many TV channels you can also watch a channel called Lok Sabha TV. It telecasts daily the discussions taking place in the Parliament House in New Delhi. Watch this channel sometime to get an idea of the functioning of the Parliament.

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The First Elections to Lok Sabha

Elections are an important aspect of our current political lives. It is the occasion where we choose our representatives. For a nation like ours with large population conducting elections is a big task. Let us take a case study of the first elections held in 1951-52 to understand this. It took four months to conduct these elections. It was based on universal adult franchise, every citizen who is twenty-one years of age or older had the right to vote. At that time there were more than 17,30,00,000 people who could vote. For most of them, this was their first opportunity to vote. Most of them were illiterate and lived in rural areas. There was one big question: “How will the people respond to this opportunity?”

Some people said, “The elections are a leap in the dark”, not suitable for a country like India. India is a caste-based society in which many people do not accept the idea that everyone is equal. So it won’t be possible to have a democratic election.”

There were other people who were very hopeful. They said, “Indians have participated in the National Movement to gain freedom from the British. They want to elect a government of their own choice. They want the government to work towards creating a society where everyone is treated equally. They also want the government to improve the living conditions of the people. Thus everyone should have an equal opportunity to elect a government of their choice.” To such people, the elections were “an act of faith”.

An Election Commission was set up to conduct the elections in a free and fair manner. Making arrangements for the first elections was a large and complex task. First, a house-to-house survey was carried out to register the eligible voters. People who contested elections belonged to political parties or were Independents. Election Commission gave a symbol to each of these candidates. These symbols were painted on the ballot boxes in which the voters had to cast their vote. The voters had to put their ballot paper into the box of the candidate they wanted to vote for. Screens were set up so that the voting (ballot) was secret.

Over 2,24,00,000 polling booths were set up across the country. Over 25,00,000 steel ballot boxes were made. Nearly 63,00,00,000 ballot papers were printed. About 10 lakh officials supervised the polls. Nearly 17,500 candidates had contested the elections across the country. Finally, 489 people were elected to the first Lok Sabha. The elections were conducted in a fair, free, impartial and orderly manner, with very little violence.

The response of the people to the new opportunity was tremendous. They participated in the polls, fully aware that their vote was a prized possession. In many places, the people treated elections as a festival and a public celebration. They dressed up for the occasion in festive clothing. Women wore their silver jewellery. Poor and illiterate people demonstrated their ability to exercise their right to vote carefully, though the voting procedures were complicated. There was a large turnout of voters not only in the urban areas but also in the rural areas. There was a very high participation of dalits and adivasis. Another remarkable feature of the elections was the wide participation of women – nearly 40 percent of the women who were eligible, cast their votes. This was very high considering the fact that many communities practiced purdah system under which women did not appear in public.

What is significant about these elections is that no other nation had ever conducted such a large scale election in which all citizens, including women, illiterate and poor, were given the power to vote. More than 46 percent of the eligible voters exercised their power to vote.

Who is the Lok Sabha member from your area? Name a few candidates you know from your State or from a nearby state.

Find out which political parties they belong to.

Discuss the meaning of the following with your teacher:

1. candidate
2. Constituency
3. ballot
4. EVM
5. election campaign
6. Election Commission
7. Voters’ List
8. Procedure of voting
9. Free and fair elections

Challenges in conducting free and fair elections

In an ideal situation, every voter is expected to know about the different candidates, their policies and decide whose policies they would prefer and who they think can represent their interests best in the Parliament and then vote. He or she should not be subjected to any pressure to vote for this or that candidate because her/his husband told her or her employer told her or her caste leader or religious teacher ordered her or someone paid money. Every one should decide independently. How ever, in actual practice, people vote based on other considerations like caste or religion or money or other gifts etc. Often powerful local people terrorise people to vote for a certain candidate. Sometimes the party in the government uses the government machinery to influence voters. The Election Commission has taken very strict measures to control these illegal practices. Find out about some of these measures.

Some interesting facts about Lok Sabha Elections in 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of Lok Sabha election</th>
<th>Percentage of voters who voted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some facts about Lok Sabha Elections

- If you had been living at that time, which side would you have agreed with? Would you have considered it a good idea for India to try to have universal adult franchise and conduct elections? Give reasons.

- An election was conducted in a free and fair manner. Making arrangements for the first elections was a large and complex task. First, a house-to-house survey was carried out to register the eligible voters. People who contested elections belonged to political parties or were Independents. Election Commission gave a symbol to each of these candidates. These symbols were painted on the ballot boxes in which the voters had to cast their vote. The voters had to put their ballot paper into the box of the candidate they wanted to vote for. Screens were set up so that the voting (ballot) was secret.

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The President and The Vice-President

The MLAs of all the states and the members of both houses of the Parliament elect the President. Both the Houses of Parliament elect the Vice-President. The Vice-President chairs the Rajya Sabha meetings and also performs the functions of the President if the President is absent. After the laws are passed by the Parliament, they can come into force only after the President gives his assent by signing them.

Thus, from the large set of people who are members of Parliament a small sub-group of ministries and they have a huge staff of government employees who work under them. One is called Legislative i.e. to make laws. The other is Executive, which is to implement laws but also to provide members who run the government according to the laws. Hence it is named as the Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers are in charge of a large number of ministries and they have a huge staff of government employees who work under them. Thus, from the large set of people who are members of Parliament a small sub-group of ministers to form the Council of Ministers.

Correct the false statements:
1. The President and the Vice-President are both elected by the same set of people.
2. Every voter in India elects the President.
3. All the MLAs of the Vidhan Sabha of Andhra Pradesh participate in the election of the President.
4. All the MLAs of all the Vidhan Sabhas and Delhi and Pondicherry and all the MPs of the Rajya Sabha and the Lok Sabha elect the President.

The Council of Ministers and Prime Minister

The Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers are chosen from among the members of Parliament (the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha). The role of Parliament is not only to make laws but also to provide members who run the government according to the laws. Hence it is said that India has a Parliamentary form of government. These two roles are separate. One is called Legislative i.e. to make laws. The other is Executive, which is to implement the laws and decisions of the Parliament. The head of the Executive is the President.

The Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers are in charge of a large number of ministries and they have a huge staff of government employees who work under them. Thus, from the large set of people who are members of Parliament a small sub-group of ministers to form the Council of Ministers.

Who is the current Prime Minister? Can you name a few earlier Prime Ministers?
Find out if there are any ministers from your state in the current central government.
Identify few important ministries and who is in charge of them at the central government.

The First Lok Sabha Election, 1952

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Seats Won</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congress</td>
<td>354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communists and allies</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialists</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naxalites</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hind Mahasabha</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ram Rajya Parivar</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other parties</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>489</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Party/coalition with most number of seats forms the government.
Party/coalition with more than half the seats forms the government.
Election commission selects the party that will form the government.
The person who has won with the largest number of votes in the Lok Sabha election will be the Prime Minister.

Collect the photos of the current one’s of the following and paste in the given boxes.

Key words

Improve your learning
1. Why were the first elections difficult to conduct? List as many reasons as you can.
2. Why do you think elections need to be free and fair?
3. For which of the following subjects can laws be made by the Members of Parliament, or the state government?
4. How do you think the government could handle the day to day work of the government?
5. In the 2009 Parliamentary Elections, no single party won a majority. How was the government formed?
6. What solution can be achieved for above? How will you address this issue if you are in the government?
7. Following is a study of women’s representation in Parliament houses including that of India and other nations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Avg. Number of Women in National Parliaments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asia Pacific</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South America</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arab</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the above information write an essay discussing the following aspects:
1. Is there an adequate representation of women in the legislative houses?
2. How is the idea of representation important to idea of democracy?
3. What solution can be achieved for above? How will you address this issue if you are in the government?

Project: When the Parliament is in session, listen to the news on the radio or television or look in the newspapers and make a list of the events that take place. Write a page on any issue discussed in the Parliament, or draw a picture of the scene in Parliament when it is being discussed.