

OPENING OF PARLIAMENT BY THE PRESIDENT

Article 87(1) of the Constitution provides:- "At the commencement of the first session after each general election to the House of the People and at the commencement of the first session of each year the President shall address both Houses of Parliament assembled together and inform Parliament of the causes of its summons."

In the case of the first session after each general election to Lok Sabha, the President addresses both Houses of Parliament assembled together after the Members have made and subscribed the oath or affirmation and the Speaker has been elected. It takes generally two days to complete these preliminaries. No other business is transacted till the President has addressed both Houses of Parliament assembled together and informed Parliament of the causes of its summons. In the case of the first session of each year, the President addresses both Houses of Parliament at the time and date notified for the commencement of the session of both the Houses of Parliament. Half-an-hour after the conclusion of the Address, both the Houses meet separately in their respective Chambers when a copy of the President's Address is laid on the Table and brought on the record of each House.

No separate summons for the President's Address are issued to members. They are informed of the date, time and place fixed for the President's Address through a Parliamentary Bulletin. At the time fixed for the President's Address, Members of both Houses of Parliament assemble together in the Central Hall of the Parliament House where the President delivers his Address. New members who have not already made and subscribed the oath or affirmation are admitted to the Central Hall on the occasion of the President's Address on production of either the certificate of election granted to them by the Returning Officer or the summons for the session issued to them. In the Central Hall, Prime Minister, Cabinet Ministers, Deputy Speaker, Lok Sabha and Deputy Chairman, Rajya Sabha are allotted seats in the first row. Other Ministers are also allotted a block of seats. The Leaders of the Opposition in Lok Sabha and in Rajya Sabha are allotted seats in the first row. Leaders of other Parties/Groups in both the Houses are also allotted suitable seats. Members of Panel of Chairmen and Chairmen of Parliamentary Committees are allotted seats in the second row. The Members are free to occupy other seats which are not allotted/earmarked.

The President's Address to both the Houses of Parliament assembled together is a solemn and formal act under the Constitution. Utmost dignity and decorum befitting the occasion are maintained. Any action on the part of a Member which mars the occasion or creates disturbance is punishable by the House to which that Member belongs. Members are expected to take their seats five minutes before the President arrives in the Central Hall.

The visitors, who are issued passes for this occasion, are also requested to be in their seats half-an-hour before the time fixed for the President's Address. It is a convention that no Member leaves the Central

Hall while the President is addressing. The President arrives at the Parliament House (North West portico) in the State Coach or in the car and is received at the Gate by the Chairman, Rajya Sabha, the Prime Minister, the Speaker, Lok Sabha, Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Secretaries-General of the two Houses. The President is conducted to the Central Hall in a procession. On the passage from the Gate to the Central Hall from where the procession passes, red baize cloth is spread.

Just when the procession enters the gangway of the Central Hall, the Marshal who has taken his position at the dais, announces the arrival of the President by saying [Hon'ble Members, Hon'ble the President] Almost simultaneously two trumpeters positioned in the Gallery above the dais sound the fanfare till the President arrives at the dais. Thereupon, Members rise in their places and remain standing until the President has taken his seat on the dais.

On reaching the floor of Central Hall in front of the dais, the procession bifurcates; the President, the Chairman of Rajya Sabha and the Speaker of Lok Sabha move towards their seats on the dais - the Chairman to the right and the Speaker to the left of the President who occupies the middle seat. The Secretaries-General and other Officers in the procession move towards the chairs placed for them in the pit of the Central Hall on either side of the dais. When President reaches his seat on the dais, a band positioned in the Lobby of the Central Hall to the right of the President, plays the National Anthem during which time everyone remains standing. Thereafter, as the President takes his seat, Presiding Officers and Members resume their seats. The President then addresses the Members in Hindi or English. The other version of the Address is read out by the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha. After the conclusion of the Address, the President rises in his seat followed by the members when the National Anthem is played again. The President, thereafter, leaves the Central Hall in a procession which is formed in the same manner as at the time of his arrival. The members remain standing till the procession leaves the Central Hall. On reaching the gate, the President takes leave of the Chairman, Rajya Sabha, the Prime Minister, the Speaker, Lok Sabha and Minister of Parliamentary Affairs. The Secretaries-General of the two Houses are also present at the occasion. Thereafter, the President leaves for the Rashtrapati Bhawan.