

PARLIAMENT DIGITAL LIBRARY COLLECTIONS

Information is the most important tool for the successful functioning of democratic institutions. A lot of primary data in the form of debates and discussions is generated on the floor of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. This valuable data is the raw material which helps in building the destiny of our nation. In this digital era, it is imperative that with the innovative application of information technology, easy access is provided to our rich parliamentary resources.

Several steps have been taken over the years to adopt new methods and new tools of ICT to bring transparency in the functioning of the Indian Parliament and to make it more open, accessible and responsive to citizens. As a new initiative towards e-Parliament, the website of Parliament Digital Library (PDL) has been developed at <https://eparlib.nic.in> which has debates and documents from 1858 to 2020. It took almost five years to digitize these documents to place them on this portal which acts more like a search engine. There are more than 4 lakh documents comprising of nearly 40 lakh pages. This digital library was opened for the general public on 11 December 2018.

Various Collections

I. LOK SABHA DEBATES

This collection provides presentation of Lok Sabha Debates in following two formats:

(i) Text of Debates

The text of Debates is a significant collection which has proceedings of each day's sitting of Lok Sabha from First to Seventeenth Lok Sabha, that is, from 13 May 1952 to 23 March 2020. The information of total 7233 sittings can be explored by Lok Sabha Number/ Date.

ii) **Debate by Titles /Members**

The debates of Lok Sabha have further been categorized to provide specific information by Title/ Member/ Debate Type/ Question Type, etc

Part-1 relating to Questions and Answers can be explored by Members, Lok Sabha Number, Ministry, Question Type, Title, and Date.

Part-2 Other than Questions and Answers can be explored by Members, Lok Sabha Number, Debate Type, Title and Date.

The detailed information, through metadata of Debates from Eleventh to Sixteenth Lok Sabha is already available in 3, 91,323 files. Similar information of the remaining Lok Sabha Debates will be uploaded in due course of time.

II. **PARLIAMENTARY DOCUMENTS**

One of the basic postulates of representative democracy is to see that governance is carried out according to the wishes of the people. In this context, Parliamentary control over the Executive assumes greater significance. It is aimed at ensuring that the Government delivers and performs to the best of the ability for public good.

The two most significant occasions for review of administration are provided by discussion on the Motion of Thanks on the President Address and the Budget. Along with these, a close and continuous check on governmental activities is exercised by Parliamentary Committees.

(i) **Presidential Addresses**

At the commencement of the First Session after each general election to the House of the People, that is, Lok Sabha and at the commencement of the First Session of each year, it is one of the constitutional functions of the President to address both Houses of Parliament assembled together and inform Parliament of the causes of its summon. All the Presidential Addresses from 1950 onwards, both in English and Hindi, can be browsed by title and date.

(ii) Budget Speeches

The speeches of various Finance Ministers and Railway Ministers since 1947 are part of this collection. The Railways Budget till 2016 was presented as a separate Budget by the Railways Minister. It merged with the General Budget from the year 2017.

(iii) Parliamentary Committee Reports

The Lok Sabha possesses an organized and comprehensive system of Committees wherein considerable volume of parliamentary business is transacted and reported.

9990 Parliamentary Committees' Reports are displayed in the portal by their respective Committee Name, Type, Lok Sabha Number, Title, and Date of Report presentation. For Committees of Rajya Sabha- link of the Rajya Sabha web site has been provided for the convenience of the users.

III. HISTORICAL DEBATES

The growth of modern parliamentary institutions is linked with our freedom struggle. Even as our leaders fought against the British rule, they also demanded legislative reforms so that the concerns and aspirations of our people could be raised in the legislative bodies. The following historical debates from 1858 to 1952 covering a period of 95 years have been digitized:

- (i)** The Government of India Act 1858 ushered in a new era in the history of Legislatures in India. The proceedings of the Legislative Council from **1858 to 1920** are available under the heading "***Indian Legislative Council Debates***".
- (ii)** The Government of India Act of 1919, that gave effect to the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms, established a bicameral Legislature at the Centre. The Indian Legislature consisted of the Governor-General and the two Houses - the Council of State and the Legislative Assembly. The *debates* of various sessions

of *the Council of State held from 1921 to 1946* and *six Legislative Assemblies from 1921 to 1946* are included in the digital library.

- (iii) These two Houses were replaced by a single House, that is, the Constituent Assembly of India – Legislative. The proceedings of its six sessions from **17 November 1947 to 24 December 1949** are titled as “*Constituent Assembly - Legislative Debates*”.
- (iv) The Constituent Assembly of India first met on the **9 December, 1946 and continued till 24 January, 1950**. The rich treasured debates of *draft making of Constitution, in English and in Hindi*, are part of this library.
- (v) The Constituent Assembly later became the Provisional Parliament and exercised all the powers and performed all the duties conferred by the Constitution on the two Houses of Parliament. It continued to do so until the two Houses were duly constituted after the First General Elections held in 1952. The *Provisional Parliament Debates from 28 January 1950 to 5 March 1952*, covering a period of 276 days, are also part of its collections.

IV. PARLIAMENTARY PUBLICATIONS

The Lok Sabha Secretariat brings out several publications for the information needs of the members of Parliament. These publications, delineating diverse aspects of Parliamentary activities, give the readers, an insight into the operational dynamics and nuances of the functioning of Parliament. This collection provides knowledge creation of the data generated by the Indian Parliament in the form of:

- (i) **Books;**
- (ii) **Information Bulletins**
- (iii) **Periodicals**

Search Mechanism

The Parliament Digital Library portal has been developed using DSpace, an open source software platform that distributes digital assets over the web through a search and retrieval system. The presentation of the digital products in an organized tree of community and collections is the main feature of DSpace. The users can access pages for individual collections and for each file; metadata has been created for easy retrieval.

DSpace has deployed SOLR search engine through which one can browse, perform simple search and advance search with filter facility. It can process text based contents for full-text searching which means that not only the metadata provided for a given file will be searchable but all of its contents will be also searchable as well.

For its collections, specific metadata fields for various digital products were developed as per the institutional needs. The architectural framework of digital library has been prepared in a very systematic and scientific manner with several checks and balances to ensure accuracy and compliance.

How to search?

A user may write any word in the search box displayed at the home page of PDL and broad results from all collections or individually will be displayed. By choosing to search from "All" on the search box, the portal will fetch and display results from all the listed collections. However, the user has the option of getting the search by choosing a particular collection and further refining through available combinations to get specific information. The portal allows the user to download the search results. However, the user cannot reproduce the same in any publication without prior permission of the competent authority of the Lok Sabha Secretariat.

One can have precise searching by putting quotes around the text of search, *eg.* "Road Transport" and search results are not affected with use of lower case or upper case. A search query written either in lower case or upper case will fetch the same results from the database.

The unique "Discover" feature simultaneously sorts and filters the database on the input query entered by the user. The results displayed by the "Discover" feature may help the user in his/ her search to cull out the maximum results from the database on related parameters and that too, in anticipation. Thus, this special feature is user friendly. As soon as user press the GO button in search box, "Discover" feature on the right hand side of the page depicts statistics of various parameters - Title, Members, Date, Lok Sabha Number, Committee Name, Debate Type, etc. which are part of specific metadata fields. Also, for any input query by the user, the "Discover" feature would anticipate and filter all the related results from the database on the above parameters.

The user also has the option to explore the data of the digital library. The "Explore by" button on the navigation bar allows user to explore by Collection, Type, Members, Lok Sabha Number, Ministry, Question Type, Debate Type, Title, Committee, Date and Language.

The Way Forward

The digital library is growing and more and more documents will be included with the passage of time. The twin objectives of the digitization process are to provide free online access of debates and documents to the users and, to preserve the physical copies of treasured parliamentary documents. Besides being an eco-friendly project, it is also a huge step towards paperless policy.