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EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

The Test of the Monsoon Session: Scrutiny Over Speed

THE HINDU

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POLITY

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THE LIFT LINE

A Parliament that passes many bills quickly can look productive and still be failing. The true measure of a legislature is not the length of its statute output but the depth of its scrutiny: the questions asked, the committees consulted, the debates held before a law binds a billion citizens. As the 2026 Monsoon Session opens with a heavy agenda, the temptation to mistake speed for health has rarely been greater.

WHY THIS EDITORIAL MATTERS FOR YOUR EXAM

The functioning of Parliament is a permanent fixture of GS2, and the examiner wants candidates who understand the institution as a working machine of accountability, not just a list of articles. A live session with a concrete legislative agenda is the ideal peg to demonstrate that understanding, connecting constitutional provisions to the everyday reality of sittings, disruptions and committee referrals.

It matters equally because the decline in parliamentary sittings and scrutiny is one of the most exam-relevant trends in Indian governance, feeding directly into questions on legislative effectiveness. **GS Paper 2:** Parliament, its structure, functioning, conduct of business, and the powers of its committees. For **Prelims**, hold the specifics: the **Monsoon Session 2026 opened on July 20, 2026** and runs to around **August 13**, with about **19 sittings**; the agenda includes the **Income-tax (Amendment) Bill**, the **Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Bill**, the **FCRA Amendment Bill**, the **MSME Development (Amendment) Bill** and the **Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Bill**; **Article 85** requires that no more than six months pass between two sessions; scrutiny tools include **Question Hour**, **Zero Hour** and **Department-related Standing Committees**. For **Mains**, argue that committee referral and orderly debate, not bill-count, define a healthy Parliament.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Indian Parliament was designed as the central forum of deliberation, where the executive is questioned and legislation is stress-tested before it becomes law. **Article 85** obliges the President to summon Parliament so that no more than six months elapse between sittings, guaranteeing that the executive cannot govern

indefinitely without facing the legislature. Within each session, Question Hour holds ministers to account, Zero Hour lets members raise urgent matters, and Department-related Standing Committees examine bills and budgets away from the glare of the floor.

Over the past two decades, however, two worrying trends have converged. First, the number of sitting days per year has fallen well below the levels of Parliament's early decades, compressing the time available for scrutiny. Second, a rising share of bills is passed with little or no reference to committees and after truncated debate, sometimes amid disruption. The 2026 Monsoon Session, with a crowded and consequential agenda, becomes a test of whether this drift can be arrested.

THE CORE ARGUMENT / ISSUE

A crowded agenda is not the same as good lawmaking

The listed bills touch taxation, the higher judiciary's strength, foreign funding of civil society, small enterprises and civil registration. Each carries real consequences and each deserves careful examination. The danger is that a long list, compressed into roughly nineteen sittings, encourages the government to prioritise passage over scrutiny, moving bills through with minimal debate. Volume is not virtue; a law rushed through is a law more likely to be flawed, litigated or resented.

The vanishing committee stage

The Department-related Standing Committees are Parliament's quiet workhorses, allowing detailed, less partisan examination of bills, expert consultation and cross-party consensus-building. When bills bypass this stage, the legislature loses its most effective instrument for improving law. Restoring the norm of referral, especially for consequential bills, is the single most important reform for the health of the institution.

Measuring what actually matters

METRIC	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	WHAT IT TRULY INDICATES
Bills passed	High count	Little, if scrutiny is skipped
Sitting days	Adequate number	Time available to deliberate
Committee referral	Bills sent for examination	Depth and quality of scrutiny
Hours of debate	Substantive floor discussion	Accountability at work
Disruption levels	Low	Productive use of scrutiny tools

The table separates the appearance of productivity from its substance. A session that passes many bills but refers none to committee and loses hours to disruption is not functioning well, however impressive the output looks.

HOW TO THINK ABOUT THIS (ANALYTICAL FRAME)

Judge Parliament by process, not product. A useful frame is the accountability chain: the executive proposes, the legislature scrutinises, and only tested proposals become law. Break any link, by cutting sitting days, skipping committees or drowning debate in disruption, and the chain fails even if bills keep emerging at the other end. Pair this with the deliberation principle: the legitimacy of a law rests partly on the quality of the debate that produced it. Both the treasury benches, who must allow scrutiny, and the opposition, who must debate rather than disrupt, share responsibility for keeping the chain intact.

THE DIAGRAM IN WORDS

Article 85 summons Parliament -> session convenes with legislative agenda -> bills introduced -> committee referral and debate (the scrutiny stage) -> informed amendment and passage -> credible law; skip scrutiny -> speed without depth -> flawed, contested law

WAY FORWARD

- ① **Refer consequential bills to committee.** Restore the convention that major legislation, such as tax, judiciary-strength and foreign-funding bills, is examined by a Standing Committee before passage, recovering Parliament's most valuable scrutiny tool.
- ② **Protect and expand sitting days.** Fix a minimum number of annual sitting days so that a heavy agenda is met with adequate time rather than compressed debate, honouring the spirit of Article 85.
- ③ **Make disruption costly and debate the norm.** Both government and opposition should commit to protecting Question Hour and floor debate, treating orderly scrutiny, not walkouts, as the legitimate way to hold power to account.
- ④ **Publish scrutiny metrics, not just output.** Report hours of debate, committee referrals and disruption alongside bills passed, so that the public and the House judge a session by the quality of its deliberation rather than the size of its statute pile.

PYQ LINKAGE AND PRACTICE

UPSC has asked about the declining role of Parliament in scrutinising the executive, the significance of Standing Committees and the tools available to the legislature for holding government accountable. This editorial lets you answer such questions with a current, concrete illustration, arguing that parliamentary productivity must be redefined around scrutiny and debate.

Practice question: “The productivity of Parliament should be measured by the quality of its scrutiny and debate, not merely by the number of bills passed.” Critically examine with reference to the role of Standing Committees and the trend in sitting days. (15 marks, 250 words)

Sources: The Hindu - editorial and opinion pages, PRS Legislative Research - Vital Stats on Parliament

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