

RSRR ~ PRS Two-Day Parliamentary Practicum Series on “Understanding the Functioning of Parliament, Law Making and the Career Avenues in Public Policy”

Theme: Understanding the Functioning of Parliament, Law Making and the Career Avenues in Public Policy

Date: 12th and 13th April, 2023

Speakers:

1. Mr. Jayraj Pandya - Manager, LAMP Fellowship (PRS Legislative Research)
2. Ms. Mitisha Sharma - Programme Associate in the Citizen Outreach Team (PRS Legislative Research)

INTRODUCTION:

The Editorial Board of RGNUL Student Research Review (RSRR) successfully organised a two-day parliamentary law lecture series, in association with PRS Legislative Research, a non-profit organisation that provides research support to Members of Parliament on legislative and policy issues.

For the event, RSRR had the honour to host Mr. Jayraj Pandya, Manager, LAMP Fellowship (PRS Legislative Research) and Ms. Mitisha Sharma, Programme Associate in the Citizen Outreach Team (PRS Legislative Research). The discussion was moderated by Ms Shreya Maloo, Junior Editor at the RSRR.

The Practicum was based on the theme, “*Understanding the Functioning of Parliament, Law Making and the Career Avenues in Public Policy.*” This lecture series delved into the intricacies of parliamentary and legislative procedures, policy research and the nuances of their implementation. The event was conducted on the 12th and 13th of April and was aimed to provide students with an in-depth idea of the workings of the Indian Parliament, the process of law-making and the career opportunities available in the field of public policy.

SPECIAL INTRODUCTORY NOTE

Before the commencement of the Practicum, a special introductory note was delivered by Ms. Anandita Bhargava, a former student of RGNUL and the former Editor-in-Chief of RSRR, who had personally experienced as a Legislative Assistant to a Member of Parliament (LAMP) fellow, a fellowship offered by PRS Legislative Research. She proceeded to detail her experiences in the policy space, while tracing the trends and trials for prospective entrants. In doing so, she also shed light on the route to premier opportunities like the LAMP fellowship and stated that her experience was exhilarating and rewarding at the same time. Her role as a LAMP fellow included working upon interventions in the Parliament, examining Bills and budgets, offering well read and well researched views upon them, first-hand witness the drafting, to learn from the group on an everyday basis.

INTRODUCTION TO THE INDIAN PARLIAMENT: WHAT DOES A DAY IN THE PARLIAMENT ENTAIL?

Mr. Jayraj Pandya took the lead, illuminating the importance of the Parliament in a democratic nation like India and explaining the intricate daily workings of the Parliament. In doing so, he gave the students an insight into how a typical day in a Parliament functions while also briefly tracing the history of the Parliament, and elucidating on the various types of bills. Extensive discussions on understanding the functioning of the Parliament and the nuances of the law-making process took place thereafter. Additionally, he succinctly enlightened the audience on the importance of various past jurisprudence such as the Vodaphone and Aadhar judgments that have shaped policy-making in modern India. He then discussed the day-to-day lives of MPs and explained basic terminologies such as the question hour and zero hour to ensure that the participants would understand the more complex concepts.

FORMULATION OF THE UNION BUDGET

Ms Mitisha Sharma primarily dealt with providing an overview of the intricacies behind the formulation of the union budget, delving into aspects that are often overlooked when analysing the budget. She described how a union budget is planned and made, providing valuable insights into the process of policy-making. Real time clips from the Parliament were played to pique the interest of attendees.

In contrast to a number of developed democracies, India does not supply its lawmakers with research staff, either through a specialised unit or by personal aides. PRS was founded to close the gap by offering superior, impartial research. The aim is to assist lawmakers in comprehending the subtleties of diverse situations and evaluating the consequences of different policy options based on data and evidence. Improving governmental transparency and community participation in the process is a related concern. Legislators are chosen by the people in a representative democracy to make decisions on various matters. It is expected of legislators to work for both the welfare of their people and the interests of the country.

THE LAMP FELLOWSHIP

Ms. Mitisha then proceeded to give her insights on possible career avenues for law students in public policy like the Legislative Assistant to a Member of Parliament Fellowship (LAMP). The fellowship project administered by PRS Legislative Research is one of the few opportunities dedicated solely to monitoring and evaluating matters pertaining to the actions of the Indian Parliament. Ms Mitisha elucidated that the LAMP Fellowship places a person in the office of a Member of Parliament for the duration of the Monsoon, Winter, and Budget sessions of Parliament. Typically, the programme begins in June and ends in April or May of the following year. For the length of the fellowship, LAMP fellows are expected to support the MP with research on all matters that may come up. The event concluded with the speakers taking questions from the audience, leading to fruitful discourse. Prospective career avenues in the research field were explored and exchanges took place regarding the viable career opportunities in the closely connected arena of law and policy.

Applications for the Fellowship are invited from an array of fields, including engineering, economics, commerce, law, history, and public policy. Although students who are familiar with policy-making in some capacity—for instance by studying law, political science, public policy, etc.—are undoubtedly more versed than other Fellows.

The program's finest feature is the diversity of the LAMP Fellows. The attendees took a keen interest in the Question-Answer session held where the speaker piqued their curiosity by asserting that applicants need not have a plethora of professional experience; all that is required is the ability to show a sufficient level of interest and comprehension of the field of legislative policy, which is determined by the application procedure which is an extremely objective procedure.

The Practicum was well received by the attendees, who actively participated in the event. The students found the Practicum insightful and informative, and they appreciated the opportunity. We are grateful to the Guest Speakers for this insightful and interactive practicum on the intricacies of law & policy. We also thank all the attendees for their active participation in the event!