

DATE: 14 AUGUST 2026

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Mahabodhi Temple Complex (Source: The Indian Express)

- **Location:** Bodh Gaya in Bihar
- **Cultural Significance**
 - Place where Siddhartha Gautama attained enlightenment.
 - Visited by Chinese traveler Hiuen Tsang in 629 AD.
 - Designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2002.
- **Contribution by Various Dynasties**
 - **Ashokan Origins (3rd Century BCE):** Emperor Ashoka built a shrine and established the Vajrasana (Diamond Throne) to mark the exact spot where Buddha sat.
 - **Gupta Period Construction (5th–6th Century CE):** The core of the present temple structure was built during the late Gupta Empire.
 - **Pala Dynasty Patronage (8th–12th Century CE):** The site flourished under the Pala rulers, who added sculptures, smaller stupas, and votive structures.
 - **Later destruction by Bakhtiyar Khilji**
 - **Restoration (19th Century):** Restored by Sir Alexander Cunningham and the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI).
- **Architectural Features:** Shikhara, Vajrasana (Diamond Throne), Chaitya niches, amalaka, kalasha, Sculpted balustrades, Buddha images, votive stupas.



2 Parliamentary Committees (Source: The Hindu)

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES

• The Strength Behind Parliament •

WHAT ARE PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES?

Parliamentary Committees are smaller groups of Members of Parliament (MPs) constituted to examine specific subjects in detail and report to the House. They help in ensuring detailed scrutiny, continuity of work and non-partisan examination of issues.

WHY ARE THEY IMPORTANT?

- Detailed examination of bills and policies
- Checks and balances on the Executive
- Expertise and specialization
- Non-partisan functioning
- Ensure accountability and transparency

TWO BROAD CATEGORIES

STANDING COMMITTEES

Constituted for the entire term of the Lok Sabha and are permanent in nature.

AD HOC / SPECIAL COMMITTEES

Constituted for a specific purpose or duration and dissolve after completing their task.

STANDING COMMITTEES OF PARLIAMENT

1. COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

Examines the Finance Bill and Demands for Grants. Considers financial matters referred by the President.

Chairperson: Lok Sabha Speaker

2. COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS (CPAC)

Examines the Appropriation Accounts and Finance Accounts of the Union and State Governments.

Chairperson: Lok Sabha Member (Opposition)

3. COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Examines estimates included in the Union Budget and suggests economies and improvements.

Chairperson: Lok Sabha Member (Opposition)

4. COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC UNDERTAKINGS (CPU)

Examines the working of public undertakings and suggests improvements in their functioning.

Chairperson: Lok Sabha Member (Opposition)

5. COMMITTEE ON SUBORDINATE LEGISLATION

Scrutinizes delegated legislation to ensure it is within the scope of the parent Act.

Chairperson: Lok Sabha Member (Opposition)

DEPARTMENT-RELATED STANDING COMMITTEES (DRSCs)

Examine Demands for Grants (other than those of Ministry of Railways and Ministry of Defence) of various Ministries/Departments.

- 24 Committees in Lok Sabha
- 24 Committees in Rajya Sabha
- Members are allocated based on proportional representation.

OTHER IMPORTANT STANDING COMMITTEES

- Committee on Ethics
- Committee on Privileges
- Committee on Petitions
- Committee on Government Assurances
- Business Advisory Committee
- Rules Committee

AD HOC / SPECIAL COMMITTEES

- Constituted to look into specific issues or for a limited period.
- Examples: Joint Committee on a Bill, Committee on Offices of Profit, etc.
- They dissolve after submitting the report.

COMPOSITION

Members are nominated by the Speaker (Lok Sabha) or Chairman (Rajya Sabha).

Proportional representation of political parties.

Tenure: Usually 1 year (for standing committees).

POWERS OF COMMITTEES

- Summon Ministers, officials and experts.
- Call for papers and records.
- Conduct inquiries and hearings.
- Make observations and recommendations.
- Reports are laid on the Table of the House.

IMPACT

- Strengthen parliamentary democracy
- Improve quality of legislation and policies
- Ensure financial prudence and accountability
- Bridge between Parliament, Executive and Citizens

Parliamentary Committees may not be in the spotlight, but they are the backbone of Parliament—ensuring informed decisions, accountability and good governance.

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3 Black Necked Crane (Source: Down To Earth)

The Black-necked Crane (Grus nigricollis) is a high-altitude migratory bird species.

- It is the only alpine crane species in the world

Habitat

- Breeds in high-altitude wetlands, alpine meadows, and marshes across the Tibetan Plateau, Ladakh (Changthang region, Tso Moriri, Tso Kar, Pangong Tso), and northern Sikkim.
- Winters in lower elevations including parts of Arunachal Pradesh (Sangti Valley in West Kameng district, Tawang) and Bhutan, as well as southern China.

Threats

- Loss of wetlands.
- Stray dogs.
- Unregulated tourism
- Infrastructure development

Protection Status:

- **IUCN Red List:** Near Threatened
- **CITES:** Appendix I
- **Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:** Schedule I

Cultural Significance

- *The bird is revered by the community of Monpas (a major Buddhist ethnic group of Arunachal Pradesh) as an embodiment of the sixth Dalai Lama (Tsangyang Gyatso).*

