



DAILY NEWSPAPER ANALYSIS

THE HINDU

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**Topic: GS2 - Leader of
Opposition and Its Importance**



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Qualifying for Leader of the Opposition

Context:-

- In the recently concluded election to the Lok Sabha (17th LS), the question will arise for the recognition of Leader of Opposition as the largest party in Opposition, is short of three members to reach to qualification (as the **Salary and Allowances of Leaders of Opposition in Parliament Act, 1977**) to recognise officially as a leader of Opposition.
- However to recognition of leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha is subject to discretion of the Speaker.
- The ruling dispensation should recognize the LoPs , realising the importance of an effective and respected Opposition in a democracy.

Importance of Leader of Opposition:-

- **Clear and Absolute majority** is being in the best interests of the polity and the people. Above everything, the nation needs a **stable government** and a **strong leader** capable of taking firm decisions to ensure security, development and good governance within the rule of law.
- However, for the success and survival of democracy, an effective Opposition is also a **categorical imperative.**

- It is said that if no Opposition exists, one may have to be created. Also, if *there is no Opposition outside, there is every danger that it may grow within.*

Historical Trend of LoPs in Indian Polity:-

- Historically, the first officially designated Opposition party in Parliament emerged from the breakup of the all-dominant Congress party in power in 1969.
- In the **6th Lok Sabha** (1977), the Congress sat in the Opposition.
- There is **no provision in the Constitution** or even in the **Lok Sabha Rules of Procedure** in regard to the recognition of the LoP.
- Right from the first Lok Sabha, the practice has been to recognise the leader of the largest party in Opposition as the LoP provided that party has **a strength that is enough to constitute the quorum for a sitting of the House**, or *one-tenth of the total membership of the House — at present that comes to 55 members.*
- From the **9th to the 15th Lok Sabhas**, since the requirement of having a minimum strength of 55 members was fulfilled, the Lok Sabha had duly recognised Opposition parties and LoP.
- The **1977 Act** defines **LoP as that member of the House who is the “Leader in that House of the party in opposition to the Government having the greatest numerical strength and recognised as such by the Chairman of the Council of States or the Speaker of the House of the People, as the case may be.**

- **The Leaders and Chief Whips of Recognised Parties and Groups in Parliament (Facilities) Act, 1998** also refers to a recognised party in the Lok Sabha as a party that has not less than 55 members.

Suggestion:-

- Since there is no constitutional provision, the 1977 law does not provide for the requirement of 55 members as an essential pre-requisite.
- As it all depends on the Speaker's directions and discretion, it may be hoped that rightful action will be taken.
- The simple way out is to substitute '**pre-poll alliance**' for 'party' or say '**party or pre-poll alliance**'.
- In any case, pre-poll alliances are a fact of our political life and are already being extended credibility and legitimacy in the matter of the President and Governors deciding on who to call first for forming the government in cases where no party secures a clear majority support in the House.

Way Forward:-

- Incidentally, what is decided in the matter of recognition of the LoP, and in treating pre-poll alliances at par with parties, may hold tremendous potential for the growth of a sound two- or three-party (or alliance) system.
- It could end the present system, a preposterous one, of more than 2,000 parties being registered with the Election Commission.

- If and when the much-awaited law for political parties is enacted, it may provide for candidates of an alliance contesting on a common symbol and an agreed common minimum programme with only national alliances or parties contesting for the Lok Sabha.