

THE SECOND CHAIR: ON LOK SABHA DEPUTY SPEAKER

Convention of electing the Deputy Speaker from the Opposition should be upheld

More than a year after the 17th Lok Sabha was constituted, the constitutionally mandated post of Deputy Speaker is lying vacant. This unusual situation is in the spotlight as the monsoon session of Parliament begins on Monday and the Rajya Sabha is scheduled to elect a Deputy Chairman. The vacancy of Deputy Speaker appears to be less of a lapse, and more a calculated delay by the ruling BJP. On September 9, the Congress leader in the Lok Sabha, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, wrote to Speaker Om Birla to initiate the process, by election or consensus. Mr. Chowdhury also recalled the convention of offering the post to the Opposition. Mr. Birla has been non-committal in his public comments on the issue, and the BJP has remained silent. Soon after the 2019 general election, the government had made some effort to fill the position. It had approached the YSR Congress, which reportedly turned it down since it would have been difficult to align their protest against the government for not according special status to Andhra Pradesh with occupying the post. While the Congress has been forceful in raising the issue, other Opposition parties have been less enthusiastic. In the Rajya Sabha, the JD(U)'s Harivansh, who has been re-elected to the House, is seeking re-election as Deputy Chairman as the ruling combine's candidate. He had defeated Congress leader B.K. Hariprasad — 125-105 votes — in elections in August 2018.

The ruling combine, despite not having a simple majority, has managed to win crucial votes several times over in the past in the Upper House. This time around, BJP leaders have claimed the support of 140 members for Mr. Harivansh. The RJD's Manoj Jha, an erudite member in the Opposition, is the joint candidate of 12 parties for the post. There was confusion within the Opposition ranks on whether this contest was worth it. Several of their senior members are likely to skip the session, considering the risk of COVID-19 infection. The BSP, which has remained a reluctant Opposition party, is unlikely to be different this time. The BJP has taken its overwhelming parliamentary majority as a justification for disregarding not only the Opposition but also parliamentary conventions. Its refusal to engage the Opposition in electing a Deputy Speaker is further eroding the common ground that India sorely requires to deal with the multitude of its current challenges. The BJP's pre-eminence has also devastated the Opposition which is struggling to muster a coherent and united response. Election by consensus of an Opposition MP as Deputy Speaker of Lok Sabha will be a course correction. The government should be magnanimous and the Opposition creative in dealing with this issue.

Meanings of Difficult Words:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ second chair (noun) – deputy chairperson, deputy presiding officer, deputy speaker. ❖ convention (noun) – custom, practice, tradition, routine. ❖ uphold (verb) – maintain, continue, preserve, protect (a custom/practice). ❖ constitute (verb) – form, inaugurate, set up, initiate. ❖ lie (verb) – be, remain, be kept (in a particular condition). ❖ the spotlight (noun) – the public attention, the focus of public/media; the public eye. ❖ lapse (noun) – failure, mistake, blunder/oversight. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ calculated (adjective) – intentional, purposeful, preconceived, deliberate. ❖ consensus (noun) – an idea or opinion that is shared by all the people in a group, agreement, concurrence. ❖ recall (verb) – recollect, bring to mind, call to mind. ❖ non-committal (adjective) – evasive, equivocal/undecided, circumspect; dodge the question, sidestep the issue. ❖ reportedly (adverb) – supposedly, seemingly, apparently, allegedly. ❖ turn down (phrasal verb) – reject, refuse, decline, say no to. |
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- ❖ **enthusiastic** (adjective) – eager, keen, committed, willing, passionate.
- ❖ **seek** (verb) – try, aim, attempt (obtain or achieve something).
- ❖ **combine** (noun) – a group of people working together for a specific reason/motive.
- ❖ **erudite** (adjective) – well educated, well informed, knowledgeable, scholarly, intellectual/ learned.
- ❖ **ranks** (noun) – the people belonging to a group.
- ❖ **reluctant** (adjective) – unwilling, disinclined, grudging, resisting.
- ❖ **unlikely** (adjective) – not likely, improbable, questionable.
- ❖ **reluctant** (adjective) – unwilling, disinclined, unenthusiastic.
- ❖ **overwhelming** (adjective) – very great/large, huge, enormous.
- ❖ **justification** (noun) – reason, rationale, premise, basis.
- ❖ **disregard** (verb) – ignore, take no notice of, pay no attention to.
- ❖ **engage someone in** (verb) – cause someone to get involved in something.
- ❖ **erode** (verb) – undermine, weaken, destroy, spoil gradually.
- ❖ **common ground** (phrase) – shared opinions (or interests).
- ❖ **sorely** (adverb) – severely, desperately, badly, critically.
- ❖ **multitude** (noun) – a lot, a great/large number, a great quantity.
- ❖ **pre-eminence** (noun) – superiority, supremacy, predominance.
- ❖ **devastate** (verb) – wreck, ruin, destroy; shatter, traumatize, distress.
- ❖ **muster** (verb) – gather together, come together, convene/assemble.
- ❖ **coherent** (adjective) – united, consolidated, joined, combined; logical, reasonable, rational.
- ❖ **course correction** (noun) – modifying, improving, rectifying (the plan of action).
- ❖ **magnanimous** (adjective) – big-hearted, generous, liberal, kind.

LONG HAUL AHEAD:

ON DEMAND-SUPPORTIVE FISCAL POLICIES

Demand-supportive fiscal policies alone can end the lockdown-induced slowdown

Factory output continued to contract in July, albeit marginally slower than in June, reflecting the depressed economic conditions as the pandemic rages on. Quick estimates for the IIP show output across the three sectoral components of the index — mining, manufacturing and electricity — all shrank, dragging the overall index to a 10.4% year-on-year contraction. While this is slower than June’s 15.8% shrinkage, a closer look reveals that the rebound in momentum witnessed in the fiscal first quarter’s last month — when the economy reopened and the contraction narrowed sharply from May’s 33.9% fall — has dissipated appreciably. The most telltale sign of this flattening is the more than halved pace of growth in the solitary use-based industrial activity of the IIP’s six product groups, in which output had turned positive in June. Growth in consumer non-durables — it includes essential household consumables — slid back to 6.7% from the preceding month’s 14.3%, betraying the abiding weakness in private consumption spending. The other five groups posted double-digit contractions, with consumer durables and capital goods shrinking 23.6% and 22.8%, respectively. If the trend in durables attests to the RBI’s evaluation last month that “private consumption has lost its discretionary elements across the board”, the capital goods data point to a dismal picture on the investment front. With demand-starved companies operating their factories well below capacity, there is little indication that the protracted six-quarter slump in this key sector, which encompasses the plants and machinery that manufacturers order when expanding or starting new ventures, is anywhere close to reversing momentum.

Electricity generation, however, provides some relief, with the contraction narrowing to 2.5% in July from June’s 10%. A deeper look at the 23 subcategories of manufacturing shows that only tobacco products and pharmaceuticals posted expansions in July, with the latter benefitting from the increased global demand for medicines, including generic drugs, in the wake of the pandemic. The manufacture of pharmaceuticals, medicinal chemical and botanical products climbed

22% in July, making it the solitary product to post an expansion of 1.8% over April-July. Textiles and garment manufacturing, employment intensive segments shrunk to 14.8% and 28.7%, respectively. To be sure, the IIP data come with a lag of six weeks and a few more recent indicators give room for some guarded hope. For one, the latest IHS Markit India Manufacturing PMI survey-based outlook signals that the sector likely posted some expansion for the first time in five months in August. And auto makers reported growth in shipments of passenger vehicles to dealers last month in anticipation of festive season demand. Still, to help sustain any incipient revival, the Centre will need to enact demand-supportive fiscal policies or risk seeing the slowdown prolong.

Meanings of Difficult Words:

- ❖ **long haul** (noun) – difficult task.
- ❖ **demand-supportive** (adjective) – encouraging demand.
- ❖ **fiscal** (adjective) – financial.
- ❖ **fiscal policy** (noun) – in simple terms, it is an estimate of taxation and government spending that impacts the economy.
- ❖ **lockdown-induced** (adjective) – produced/effected by lockdown.
- ❖ **lockdown** (noun) – an emergency protocol implemented by the authorities that prevents people from leaving from a place; An extended state of confinement/encirclement/ isolation of a person by the authority.
- ❖ **slowdown** (noun) – economic decline, recession, slump/depression.
- ❖ **contract** (verb) – decline, decrease, diminish, reduce.
- ❖ **albeit** (conjunction) – though, even though, however.
- ❖ **reflect** (verb) – indicate, show, reveal, exhibit.
- ❖ **depressed** (adjective) – weakened, impaired, debilitated, distressed, sluggish.
- ❖ **pandemic** (noun) – the worldwide spread of a new disease; The illness spreads around the world and typically affects a large number of people across a wide area.
- ❖ **rage** (verb) – be at its height, be uncontrollable; reach a high degree of intensity.
- ❖ **Index of Industrial Production (IIP)** (noun) – a composite (combined/complex) indicator that measures the changes in the volume of production of a basket of industrial products during a given period with respect to the volume of production in a chosen base period.
- ❖ **index** (noun) – indicator, guide, mark, measure.
- ❖ **shrank** past of **shrink** (verb) – lessen, reduce, decrease.
- ❖ **year-on-year** (adjective) – year over year (for comparison).
- ❖ **contraction** (noun) – In economics, it refers to a decline in national output as measured by gross domestic product.
- ❖ **shrinkage** (noun) – reduction, lessening, lowering, drop, decline.
- ❖ **rebound** (noun) – recovery.
- ❖ **narrow** (verb) – diminish, decrease, reduce.
- ❖ **fall** (noun) – decrease, decline, drop, slump.
- ❖ **dissipate** (verb) – disappear, vanish, dissolve.
- ❖ **appreciably** (adverb) – considerably, substantially, significantly.
- ❖ **telltale** (adjective) – revealing, suggestive, indicative, significant.
- ❖ **flatten** (verb) – slow (down) an increasing rate.
- ❖ **halve** (verb) – reduce by half (50%).
- ❖ **solitary** (adjective) – single, lone, sole, only.
- ❖ **use-based** (adjective) – based on the use of products/goods by the customer.
- ❖ **consumer non-durables** (noun) – products/goods (such as food, clothing, fuel, etc.) which are produced for immediate use and frequently replaced by the consumer.
- ❖ **consumer durables** (noun) – manufactured products/goods (such as TV, fridge, AC, motorbike, car & etc) which last for an extended period of time.
- ❖ **household** (noun) – family, house.
- ❖ **consumable** (noun) – a product/good that is intended to be used up regularly (e.g. food, water & etc.,).
- ❖ **slide** (verb) – fall, drop, plunge/descend (to a lower level).
- ❖ **preceding** (adjective) – previous, prior, earlier.
- ❖ **betray** (verb) – reveal, disclose, lay bare, make known, uncover.

- ❖ **abiding** (adjective) – persisting, long-lasting, enduring, continuing.
- ❖ **private consumption or consumption expenditure** (noun) – the spending by households (consumers) on goods and services, excluding new housing.
- ❖ **capital goods** (noun) – capital goods are man-made, durable items that businesses use to produce goods and services. They include tools, buildings, vehicles, machinery, and equipment. Capital goods are also called durable goods, real capital, and economic capital.
- ❖ **attest** (verb) – affirm, declare, claim something is the case; certify, corroborate, confirm.
- ❖ **discretionary** (adjective) – optional, voluntary, non-mandatory, up to the individual.
- ❖ **across the board** (phrase) – applying to all.
- ❖ **point to** (verb) – indicate, suggest, denote.
- ❖ **dismal** (adjective) – bad, poor, dreadful, awful/terrible.
- ❖ **picture** (noun) – situation, condition, circumstances.
- ❖ **front** (noun) – a particular situation (or) front line, vanguard.
- ❖ **demand-starved** (adjective) – deprived of demand; hungry for demand.
- ❖ **protracted** (adjective) – prolonged, continuous, extended, lengthened.
- ❖ **slump** (noun) – decline, tumble, drop, steep fall.
- ❖ **venture** (noun) – undertaking/involving (in a risky business).
- ❖ **encompass** (verb) – include, subsume, incorporate.
- ❖ **reverse** (verb) – alter, change.
- ❖ **pharmaceutical** (adjective) – relating to the manufacture and sale of medicinal drugs.
- ❖ **expansion** (noun) – growth, development.
- ❖ **generic** (adjective) – general treatment with (generic) unbranded drugs.
- ❖ **generic drug** (noun) – its contains the same chemical substance as a drug that was originally protected by chemical patents.
- ❖ **in the wake of** (phrase) – as a result of some event, especially an unpleasant one; aftermath, as a consequence of.
- ❖ **intensive** (adjective/usually in combination) – (in business) concentrating on a particular thing.
- ❖ **to be sure** (phrase) – certainly, surely; used to highlight something.
- ❖ **lag** (noun) – time lag; a period of time between two events; one that lags (failing to keep up a desired pace).
- ❖ **room** (noun) – scope, opportunity, chance (for something to happen).
- ❖ **guarded** (adjective) – cautious, careful, circumspect.
- ❖ **for one** (phrase) – to emphasize that a particular person is definitely viewing in a specific way, even if other people are not.
- ❖ **IHS Markit** (noun) – it is a global leader in information, analytics and solutions for the major industries and markets that drive economies worldwide. It partners with clients in business, finance and government to help them see the big picture with unrivaled insights that lead to well-informed, confident decisions.
- ❖ **Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI)** (noun) – Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) is a monthly business survey data provided by IHS Markit. The monthly data are derived from surveys of senior executives at private sector companies. PMI data is used for accurate and timely insight into the health of a particular economy. The PMI data are used by financial and corporate professionals to better understand where economies and markets are headed, and to uncover opportunities.
- ❖ **outlook** (noun) – viewpoint, opinion, perspective.
- ❖ **anticipation** (noun) – expectation, prediction/ forecast.
- ❖ **sustain** (verb) – support, maintain, bolster up, prop up.
- ❖ **incipient** (adjective) – beginning, starting, emerging, developing.
- ❖ **revival** (noun) – improvement, rallying, picking up; comeback.
- ❖ **prolong** (verb) – extend, lengthen, protract, stretch out.