Committee on Government Assurances

PRELIMS: Indian Polity and Governance

MAINS: GS 2 – Parliament structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.

Why in the News?

Since 2014, the Ministry of Home Affairs made 421 assurances in the Lok Sabha and 338 assurances in the Rajya Sabha, but 'dropped' close to 15% and 12% of them, respectively

What is the Committee on Government Assurances?

- **Government assurances** – They are promises, undertakings, or commitments made by ministers on the floor of the House, during questions or debates, that involve further action by the government.
- **Committee on Government Assurance** (CGA) – It was formed under Standing Committees of the Parliamentary Committees in the year 1953 in Lok Sabha and 1972 in Rajya Sabha to make sure assurances are being implemented.
- **Assurance statuses** - If an assurance is not fulfilled within three months of the date commenced , it is made us pending.
    - If there is no extension of that particular assurance is made, then it becomes dropped.
- **Nodal Ministry -** The Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs keeps in record of these assurances and publishes their status on *the Online Assurance Monitoring System (OAMS) Portal*, under the Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, 1962.

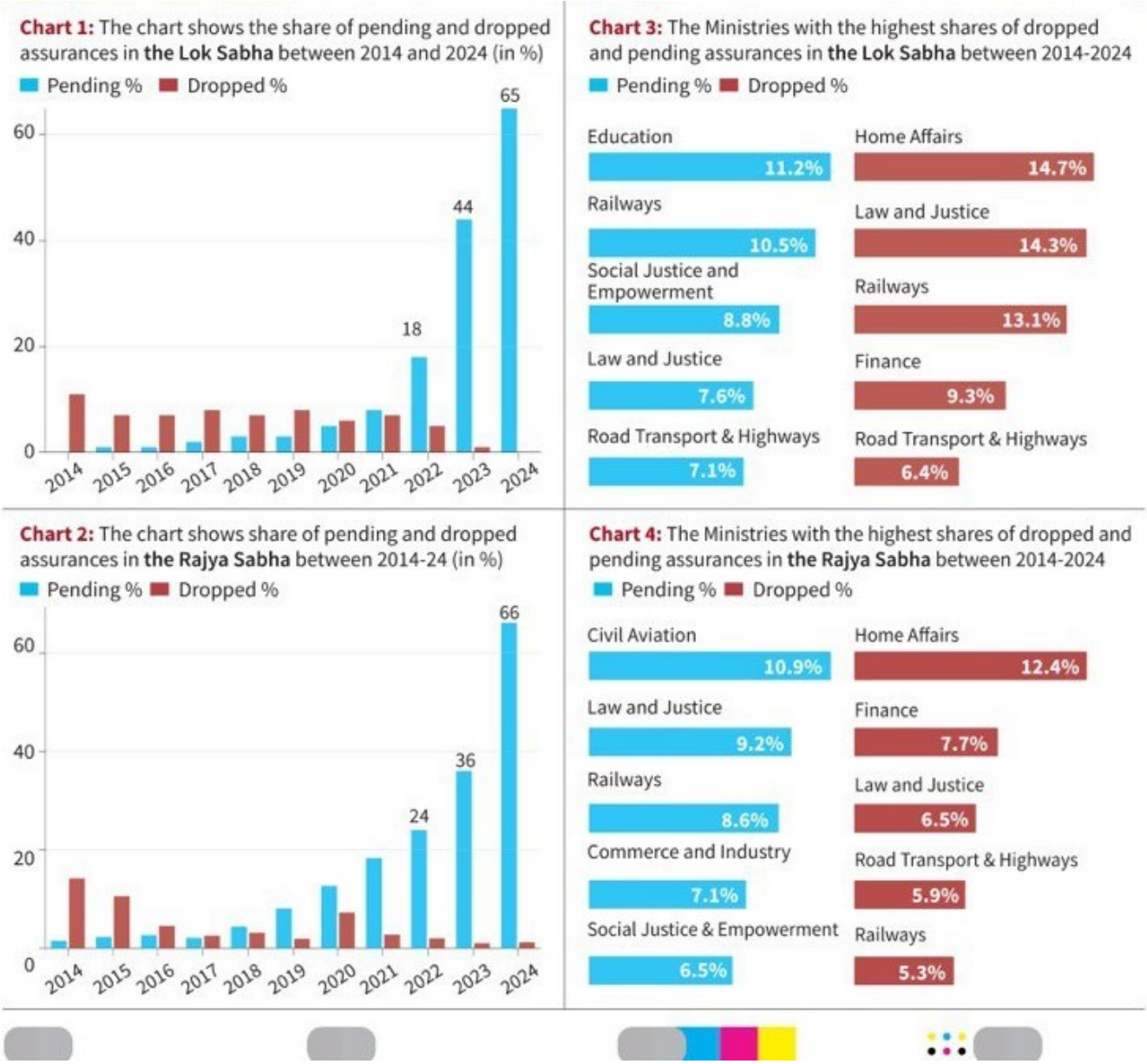
- **Composition -** A Chairperson and not more than 15 members(currently 10 members) nominated by the Speaker in Lok Sabha and Chairperson in Rajya Sabha.
- **Functions -** Scrutinizing the assurances, promises, undertakings etc., discussed on bills, resolutions, motions, etc.
- Reporting about the status of the assurance whether they are implemented or not.
- Reports of the committee are presented to the house either by the Chairman of the Committee or any member of the committee in their absence.
- **Online Assurances Monitoring System (OAMS)** – It is a digital platform aimed at ensuring that assurances made by Ministers in Parliament are systematically tracked, monitored, and fulfilled.

What are the significances of the assurances committee?

- **Ensuring accountability** - The CGA plays a crucial role in holding the government accountable for its promises and undertakings.
- **Strengthening parliamentary democracy** - By holding the executive accountable, it reinforces the principles of parliamentary democracy.
- **Strengthening legislative oversight** - By tracking ministerial assurances, the Committee reinforces legislative oversight, ensuring that the executive is held accountable for its commitments.
- **Act as Watchdog** – The committee prevents ministers from making unfulfilled promises without facing scrutiny.

What are the challenges faced by the Committee on Government Assurances?

- **Higher rate of pending and drop rate cases** - More than implementation, the pending and drop rates are higher.
- 65% and 66% of assurances made in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha are pending for 2024.
- Ministry of Home affairs has high drop rate of 14.7% and 12.4% in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha respectively.



- **Lack of cooperation from ministries** - The Committee frequently encounters resistance or insufficient cooperation from various ministries.
- This lack of collaboration can obstruct the Committee's ability to track and monitor assurances effectively.
- **High volume of assurances** - The sheer number of assurances given in Parliament presents a daunting task for the Committee.
- Managing and tracking these numerous commitments can overwhelm the Committee's resources and capabilities.
- **Limited technical expertise** - Members of the Committee, primarily parliamentarians, may not possess specialized knowledge required to scrutinize complex issues adequately.
- **Resource constraints** - The Committee often operates with limited resources, including a lack of research support and technical advisors.
- **Non-Binding recommendations** - The advisory nature of the Committee's recommendations means that ministries are not legally obligated to implement them.

What can be done to ensure the assurances?

- More members can be included in the committee for effective implementation.
- Sanctions can be imposed on the ministry if there is high drop rate or pending rate.
- Clearer lines of communication can be established between the Committee and various ministries to ensure timely updates and accountability for assurances.
- The Committee can be equipped with specialized research personnel to assist in analyzing complex issues related to assurances.
- More than including assurances in the question hour, a separate meeting can be conducted for the committee for even more analysis of the assurances

Reference

[The Hindu | Dropped assurances in Parliament]

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