Significant Moments of the Ninth Parliament

Date : 14-10-2024

The ninth parliamentary term spanned 4 years, 1 month, and 4 days, beginning with the inaugural session on August 20, 2020, until its dissolution. During this period, the Parliament convened for 390 days across five sessions. Significant events during the ninth parliamentary term included constitutional amendments, the election of a successor president through a Parliamentary vote, the submission of no-confidence motion, the removal of a commission chairman/member through a resolution, and the suspension of the service of Parliamentarians due to disciplinary actions.

Constitutional Amendments

Accordingly, with the commencement of the ninth Parliament in 2020, the then Minister of Justice, Hon. M.U.M. Ali Sabry, presented the **"Twentieth Constitutional Amendment"** Bill to Parliament on September 22, 2020, aiming to amend the Constitution.

On October 21 and 22, following the debate pertaining to the second reading, the Bill was passed with a special majority. During the voting, 156 votes were cast in favor, and 65 votes were cast against the Bill. After the Committee Stage, the Bill's third reading was also passed by a special majority, with 156 votes in favor and 65 votes against. The Bill, with amendments, was subsequently approved. On October 29, 2020, following the Speaker's assent, the Twentieth Constitutional Amendment was officially enacted.

In 2022, following the resignation of President Hon. Gotabaya Rajapaksa due to the prevailing crisis, the Hon. Ranil Wickramasinghe, who was appointed as the eighth Executive President, formed a new cabinet. As part of this cabinet, the Hon. (Dr.) Wijeyadasa Rajapakshe, PC, Minister of Justice, Prisons Affairs, and Constitutional Reforms, introduced the **"Twenty-Second Constitutional Amendment"** Bill to Parliament on August 10, 2022, to amend the Constitution.

Subsequently, during the debate pertaining to the second reading held on October 20 and 21, the Bill received 179 votes in favor and 1 vote against. During the Committee Stage, amendments were incorporated into the Bill in accordance with the Supreme Court ruling. During the vote for the third, 174 votes were cast in favor, and 1 vote against. Accordingly, the Bill was passed as the **"Twenty-First Constitutional Amendment"**. On October 31, 2022, following the Speaker's assent and, the Twenty-First Constitutional Amendment was officially enacted.

No-Confidence Motions and Removal of Commission Chairmans/Members through Resolutions

No-confidence motion against the Hon. Udaya Gammanpila, Minister of Power

The no-confidence motion against the Hon. Udaya Gammanpila, Minister of Power, is considered the first no-confidence motion presented in the Ninth Parliament. It was submitted by 43 members of the opposition, including the Opposition Leader, Hon. Sajith Premadasa. The debate on this motion took place on July 19 and 20, 2021. During the subsequent vote, the motion received 61 votes in favor and 152 votes against, resulting in its defeat.

Resolution for the Removal of J.D.B.M.J.P.K. Ratnayake from Office

The resolution for the removal of J.D.B.M.J.P.K. Ratnayake from membership of the Sri Lanka Public Utilities Commission, as per the provisions of the Sri Lanka Public Utilities Commission Act No. 35 of 2002, was presented by Hon. Dinesh Gunawardena, Prime Minister and Minister of Provincial Councils and Local Government Affairs. The debate on this resolution took place on May 24, 2023, during which the motion received 123 votes in favor and 77 votes against, resulting in the resolution being passed with a majority of 46 votes.

No-confidence motion against Hon. Keheliya Rambukwella, Minister of Health.

The no-confidence motion against the Hon. Keheliya Rambukwella, Minister of Health, was presented by 45 members of the opposition, including the Opposition Leader, Hon. Sajith Premadasa. The debate on this motion took place for three days, on September 6, 7, and 8, 2023. Following the debate, during the subsequent vote, 113 votes were cast against the motion, while 73 votes were in favor. As a result, the motion was defeated by a majority of 40 votes.

No-confidence motion against the Hon. Mahinda Yapa Abeywardana, Speaker

On March 19, 2024, the Opposition Leader, the Hon. Sajith Premadasa, along with 45 members representing the main opposition, presented a no-confidence motion against Hon. Mahinda Yapa Abeywardana, the Speaker of the Parliament. The debate on this motion took place on March 19, 20, and 21. At the conclusion of the debate, during the subsequent vote, 117 votes were cast against the motion, while only 75 votes were in favor. As a result, the no-confidence motion was defeated in Parliament by a majority of 42 votes. Following this, the Speaker made a special statement.

The Election of a Member of Parliament to fill the vacancy created by the Executive President for the first time in Parliamentary History

Amid the political crisis in the country, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa resigned from the presidency on July 14, 2022. Consequently, in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution, a Member of Parliament was elected to fill the vacant position. Until the said, Hon Ranil Wickremesinghe, the Prime Minister at the time, served as the acting President.

In this context, in terms of the Presidential Elections (Special Provisions) Act No. 2 of 1981, Parliament convened on July 19 to conduct the election. During this session, Hon Ranil Wickremesinghe, Prime Minister and acting President and Members of Parliament Hon. Dullas Alahapperuma, Hon. Anura Dissanayaka were nominated to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of the President Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

Accordingly, for the first time in Parliamentary history, a vote was held in Parliament to elect a President on July 20, 2022. During this voting, the Hon Ranil Wickremesinghe was elected as the eighth Executive President of the country by a majority. In this secret ballot held, Hon Ranil Wickremesinghe received 134 votes, while Hon. Dullas Alahapperuma received 82 votes and Hon. Anura Dissanayaka received 3 votes.

Suspensions of the Service Term of Members of Parliament

On August 23, 2023, due to a contentious situation arising from raising supplementary questions related to questions for oral answers in Parliament, Members of Parliament, Hon. Nalin Bandara Jayamaha and Hon. Wasantha Yapabandara, caused clamour. Given the situation, Deputy Speaker Hon. Ajith Rajapakse temporarily suspended the parliamentary session for 10 minutes. Thereafter, the Speaker, Hon. Mahinda Yapa Abeywardana, who took the chair suspended Hon. Nalin Bandara Jayamaha and Hon. Wasantha Yapabandara from the proceedings of that day.

Furthermore, on October 19, 2023, in light of a chaotic situation that arose during the questions for oral answers in Parliament, the Speaker, the Hon. Mahinda Yapa Abeywardana, announced that the service term of Hon. Ajith Mannapperuma, would be suspended for four weeks with effect from that day. This action was taken as touching the mace while placed in the bracket of the chamber is considered a serious disciplinary violation under Standing Order 77(3).

Meanwhile, on October 20, 2023, due to an incident reported to have occurred between Members of Parliament, Hon. Diana Gamage, Hon. K. Sujith Sanjaya Perera, and Hon. Rohana Bandara, their service term was suspended for one month, effective from December 2, 2023 by way of a motion moved in Parliament.

This motion was presented to Parliament on December 2, 2023, based on the recommendations made to Parliament after considering the matter by the Committee on Ethics and Privileges. During the voting, 57 votes were cast in favor of the proposal, while 1 vote was against it. Additionally, 3 members were recorded as abstaining from voting on the motion.

Additionally, on May 23, 2023, Member of Parliament Hon. Ali Sabri Raheem was involved in an incident related to the smuggling gold and mobile phones worth more than 70 million rupees into the country through the VIP terminal of the Bandaranaike International Airport at Katunayake. Based on the recommendations of the Committee on Ethics and Privileges, his parliamentary service was suspended for a month. The suspension was implemented through a motion in Parliament, citing his misconduct, which was deemed to violate the privileges of Parliament and Members of Parliament, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order 118, effective from March 6, 2024, for a duration of

one month.