



By Sabir Shah

First published in [The News International](#)

No change recorded in Japan, 651 alterations in Malaysia

LAHORE: While Japan is the only developed country on the planet whose constitution has never been amended since its enactment in 1947, the US has made 27 alterations since 1787, India has made 94 changes since 1950, the latest Chinese Constitution has been altered four times since 1982, Australia has made only eight amendments since 1901, France initiated 18 revisions since 1958, Belgium has recorded 23 adjustments since 1994 and Malaysia has witnessed 651 changes on 42 different occasions since 1957.

As far as the amendments to the Malaysian Constitution are concerned, since each amendment contains a number of clauses and if all the rewritten clauses are counted as separate alternations, then this Far Eastern nation has recorded 651 amendments till date.

A study conducted by The News shows that of all these eight afore-mentioned developed nations, the 223-year old US Constitution is the oldest written set of governing laws in the world. An amendment in the US may be ratified when two-third majority of the state legislatures apply to Congress for a constitutional convention to consider alterations, which are then sent to the states for approval.

The Congress may then require ratification by a special convention. The convention method has been used only once in 1933 to approve the 21st Amendment. Regardless of the method of proposing an amendment, final ratification requires approval by three-fourths of the states.

However, Article 5 of the US Constitution clearly states that no amendment may deprive a state of equal representation in the Senate without that state's own consent. It is interesting to note that out of the 27 amendments made in the US Constitution since its inception in 1787, first 10 amendments or the Bill of Rights had come into effect in just four years by 1791.

The Indian Constitution, written by Dr Ambedkar, came into effect in 1950. With 117,369 words encompassing its English language version, this longest written constitution in the world contains 395 articles, 12 schedules and 94 amendments.

An amendment to the Indian Constitution can be made through introduction of bills in any one of the legislative houses. The bills can be passed by simple majority of the parliament. Before sending the bills for president's assent, there can be voting among the members of parliament present. If majority of them vote in favour of the amendment, it is accepted. An amendment can also be finalised if two-thirds of the members of parliament present vote in its favour. However, the number of voters should be more than half of the total number of members of the house. In some cases, bills for amendments to the Indian Constitution may also require the ratification of the legislatures of at least half of the Indian states.

The Japanese Constitution has never been amended once since its enactment in 1947, though Article 96 provides that changes can be made. However, a proposed amendment must first be approved by both the legislative houses by at least a two-third majority of each house (rather than just a simple majority). It must then be submitted to a referendum to win a simple majority only. A successful amendment is finally promulgated by the emperor, but the monarch cannot veto an amendment.

Read the rest of the [article](#) .