

**PARLIAMENTARY RESEARCH & TRAINING  
INSTITUTE FOR DEMOCRACIES**

**PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS**

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## **Introduction**

Parliamentary Questions is a technique of parliamentary surveillance over administration in a parliamentary democracy. In this system, the Government is accountable for all its acts of omission and commission to the Parliament and through the Parliament to the people. Hence, the atmosphere in the House during the Question Hour pulsates with the energizing power of democracy. In the Lok Sabha, the first hour of every sitting is devoted to asking and answering of questions and this hour is known as Question Hour.

The Question Hour starts at 11.00 A.M. and concludes at 12.00 Noon on five days in a week when the House has its sittings. No business other than questions is transacted during the Question Hour. Only oath by new members or obituary references are taken up during the Question Hour but the time taken thereon is not made good by extending the Question Hour beyond 12.00 Noon. The procedure to deal with questions is governed by the Rules 32 to 54 of the *Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha* and Directions 10 to 18 of the *Directions by the Speaker*.

## **Types of Questions**

Members have a right to ask questions to elicit information on matters of public importance within the special cognizance of the Ministers concerned. The questions are of four types:

- I. Starred Questions
- II. Unstarred Questions
- III. Short Notice Questions
- IV. Questions to Private Members

A ***Starred Question*** is one to which a member desires an oral answer from the Minister in the House and is required to be distinguished by an asterisk. Answer to such a question may be followed by supplementary questions by members.

An *Unstarred Question* is one to which written answer is desired by the Members and is deemed to be laid on the Table of the House by the Minister. Thus it is not called for oral answer in the House and no supplementary question can be asked thereon.

A member may give a notice of question on a matter of public importance and of urgent character for oral answer at a notice less than 10 days. Such a question is known as '*Short Notice Question*'.

A question may also be addressed to a Private Member (Rule 40), provided that the subject matter of the question relates to some Bill, Resolution or other matter connected with the business of the House for which that member is responsible. The procedure in regard to such questions is same as that followed in the case of questions addressed to a Minister with such variations as the Speaker may consider necessary.

In Lok Sabha, the List of Starred Questions is printed on green paper, the List of Unstarred Questions on white paper, the List of Short Notice Questions on pink paper and the List of Questions to Private Members on yellow paper, so that members can distinguish these Lists easily.

### **Allotment of days for Questions**

For the purpose of answering question in the Lok Sabha, the Ministries and Departments of the Government of India have been divided into five groups — A, B, C, D & E and fixed days have been allotted to various groups of Ministries for answering questions, on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, respectively. Normally on Saturdays, there is no sitting of the Lok Sabha. However, if a sitting is fixed on Saturday, there is no Question Hour on that day. Also on the day when the President of India addresses sitting of the two Houses assembled together or during the period when the session is extended beyond the scheduled programme of sittings, there is no Question Hour, unless the condition of fifteen clear days for giving notices of questions is

satisfied. The grouping of Ministries for answering of questions is done in such a way that each Minister has one fixed day in the week for answering of questions in the Lok Sabha and these fixed days do not clash with their corresponding days for answering of Questions in the Rajya Sabha. If there is no sitting of the House on any of the above five days on account of holiday, the questions pertaining to the group of Ministries falling on that day are not put down for answering during that week. The Ministries/Departments of the Government of India for answering questions during the Sixteenth Session of the Sixteenth Lok Sabha were grouped as under:—

<i>Group</i>	<i>Ministries /Departments</i>
Monday (Group 'A')	Commerce and Industry; Culture; Human Resource Development; Labour and Employment; Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises; Petroleum and Natural Gas; Skill Development and Entrepreneurship; Steel; Tourism; Tribal Affairs.
Tuesday (Group 'B')	Agriculture and Farmers Welfare; Chemicals and Fertilizers; Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution; Food Processing Industries; Heavy Industries and Public Enterprises; Home Affairs; Housing and Urban Affairs; Parliamentary Affairs; Social Justice and Empowerment.
Wednesday (Group 'C')	Prime Minister; Atomic Energy; Coal; Communications; Defence; Development of North Eastern Region; Earth Sciences; Electronics and Information Technology; External Affairs; Law and Justice; Minority Affairs; Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions; Planning; Railways; Science and Technology; Space; Statistics and Programme Implementation.

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Thursday (Group 'D')	Civil Aviation; Drinking Water and Sanitation; Information and Broadcasting; Mines; New and Renewable Energy; Panchayati Raj; Power; Road Transport and Highways; Rural Development; Shipping; Textiles; Water Resources; River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation; Youth Affairs and Sports.
Friday (Group 'E')	Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy (AYUSH); Corporate Affairs; Environment, Forest and Climate Change; Finance; Health and Family Welfare; Women and Child Development.

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The grouping of Ministries is done in such a way that as far as possible, each group of Ministries attracts more or less equal number of questions.

On fixation of date for the commencement of a session of Lok Sabha and its duration, days on which the House is to sit are earmarked for answering of questions by Ministers in a rotational order. Information about the dates allotted for asking and answering of questions, etc. is contained in the following documents which are circulated to Members alongwith the summons for the session:—

- (i) Provisional Calendar of Sittings
- (ii) Bulletin Part-II
- (iii) Chart showing dates of Ballots and last dates of receipt of Notices of Questions

### **Notices of Questions**

A member has to give a minimum of 15 clear days' notice of a question. Members can give notices of questions following the day on which summons are issued.

The notices of questions should be addressed to the Secretary-General, Lok Sabha, in prescribed forms available in the Parliamentary Notice Office (PNO). Besides the text of the question, the notice should state clearly the designation of the Minister to whom the question is addressed, as also the date on which the question is desired to be placed on the list of questions for answer. Where members table more than one notice of questions for the same day, they may indicate the order of preference *inter-se*.

The name of the member should be written in block letters at the top of the notices of Questions. Similarly, the member's division number should also be indicated. Every notice of a question has to be individually signed by the member. Notice of questions bearing only stamped/carbon signatures of the members are treated as unsigned notices and are referred back to the members. Notices of questions tabled by members bearing signatures which do not tally with the specimen signatures and their genuineness is in doubt, are treated as invalid and returned to the members concerned requesting them to put their signatures which may tally with the specimen provided by them. Likewise, questions written in illegible hand are liable to be referred back to the members.

As an initiative towards e-Parliament and paperless office an e-portal, namely Members' Portal was launched in 2016. Members who wish to submit notices of questions online may do so as intimated *vide* Bulletin Part-II, No. 3739 dated 17 July, 2016.

If a notice is signed by more than one member, it is deemed to have been given by the first signatory only. Each notice of a question should, therefore, be signed by one member only. Notice of each question should be given separately.

A member shall be allowed to give not more than five notices of questions both for oral and written answers, in all, for any day. Notices received in excess of five from a member for a day shall be kept for subsequent day(s) concerning that Minister(s)

during the period of that session only. Members who intend to give notices for the entire session may do so by indicating their *inter-se* preference. In case, no such preferences are indicated, notices of questions in excess of five per day shall be considered for subsequent day(s) on the basis of point of time of their receipt. However, the existing overall limit of five admitted questions, both starred and unstarred, per day per member shall continue. Questions in excess of five for any sitting are treated as lapsed. Member concerned is informed about such questions through the Lok Sabha website and if he/she revives notices of these questions by giving fresh notices, these are considered for admission for subsequent day(s), if any.

### **Ballot of Questions**

The time and date of the ballots are notified to the members through the Questions, chart circulated along with the summons. Separate ballots are held for Starred and Unstarred Questions. For holding ballots, all the notices of Starred and Unstarred Questions are entered into the computer against the names of the members separately for a particular date of answer, showing the time of the receipt of the notice, whether Starred and Unstarred, order of preference given by the member, language in which the question is written *i.e.* English or Hindi and the Ministry to which the notice is addressed.

The ballot is held in respect of all the notices received in the Secretariat upto 10.00 hours on the fifteenth day before the respective date of answer through computerized auto ballot system on the computer in the presence of a sitting member of Lok Sabha either in the Central Hall of the Parliament House or in Question Branch (Room No. 324, Parliament House Annexe in order to determine their *inter-se* priority. The members are also requested through a paragraph in Bulletin Part-II to be present at the time of ballot of questions. In case any sitting member is not available at the



time of holding the ballots, the ballots are then held in the presence of Joint Secretary/Director in charge of questions. The member/officer in whose presence the ballots are held is required to sign the statement indicating the results of the ballots. The results of ballots are displayed on the Notice Board for the information of members. The Ballot results of Notices of Questions (both Starred and Unstarred) are also uploaded on the Lok Sabha website for information of members. A Para on the same is also issued in Bulletin Part-II for the information of the members. Starred and Unstarred questions are numbered separately according to the priority gained by them at the ballot and entered in separate diaries in computer.

### **Admissibility of Questions**

A question is primarily asked for the purpose of obtaining information on a matter of public importance. The conditions governing admissibility of questions have been laid down under Rule 41 (2). Apart from these provisions, admissibility of questions is also determined under Direction 10A of the *Directions by the Speaker*, Lok Sabha, past precedents, decisions and observations from the Chair, well-established parliamentary practices, usages and conventions. Mere seniority in the ballot does not guarantee that the question will be admitted unless for it is admissible as per the above mentioned provisions. The following types of questions are not admitted:—

- (i) questions which are not clearly and precisely expressed and are too general and incapable of any specific answer or are in the nature of a leading question;
- (ii) questions containing arguments, inferences or defamatory statements or otherwise referring to the character or conduct of any person, except in his official or public capacity;

- (iii) questions seeking expression of opinion or the solution of an abstract legal question or of a hypothetical proposition;
- (iv) questions which are in substance repetition of those answered previously or in regard to which information is available in accessible documents or in ordinary works of reference;
- (v) questions, the subject-matter of which is pending before any court of law or any other tribunal or body set up under law or is under consideration before a Parliamentary Committee;
- (vi) questions making discourteous references to foreign countries with whom India has friendly relations;
- (vii) questions raising policy matters too large to be dealt with within the limits of answer to question;
- (viii) questions seeking information about matters which are in their nature secret, such as composition of Cabinet Committees, Cabinet discussions, or advice given to the President in relation to any matter in respect of which there is a constitutional obligation not to disclose information;
- (ix) questions which ordinarily exceed 150 words;
- (x) questions relating to a matter of day-to-day administration or which tend to further the interest of an individual or a few individuals;
- (xi) questions which relate to petitions and memoranda received by Ministers, which are not of public importance;
- (xii) questions, the subject matter of which is primarily within the jurisdiction of Chief Election Commissioner, Comptroller and Auditor General, Courts and other such functionaries;
- (xiii) questions which tend to encourage fissiparous and divisive tendencies and weaken the unity and integrity of the country; and

(xiv) questions which relate to a matter within the jurisdiction of the Speaker.

Questions seeking detailed information of statistical nature or otherwise, those concerning matters of local interest, staff matters including service grievance and those of interest to a limited section of the people or which relate to representation in the services of communities protected under the Constitution such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes in which no question of policy is involved, may be admitted for written answer, that is, as Unstarred Questions. Similarly, questions, the replies of which are likely to be very lengthy, are also admitted as Unstarred Questions.

Questions relating to statutory corporations and limited companies in which Government has financial or controlling interest, are admitted only where their subject matter relates to a matter of policy or to an act of omission on the part of the Minister, or if they raise a matter of public interest. Questions, which clearly relate to day-to-day administration and tend to throw work on the Ministries, corporations and limited companies, not commensurate with the results to be achieved, or may interfere in the autonomy, are normally disallowed.

A compilation entitled Statutory Corporations, Companies and other bodies in which the Government of India has financial or controlling interest is brought out by the Lok Sabha Secretariat and is made available on the Lok Sabha website.

Information in respect of working of such statutory corporations and limited companies may be obtained by the members directly from these corporations/limited companies. However, the matters on which such information is asked by members directly from these companies, etc. should be normally those on which the questions in Lok Sabha would be permissible,

but for the autonomy of the corporations, etc. to which the matter relates.

Questions relating to State matters, which are not primarily the concern of the Government of India, or matters under the control of bodies not primarily responsible to the Government of India, are not admitted. Similarly, questions relating to information on matters, which are, or have been the subject of correspondence between the Union Government and the State Governments, are not generally admissible.

However, notices of questions about the implementation of Centrally Sponsored Schemes like Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, Mid Day Meal Scheme, Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Gramin Awaas Yojana, Indira Awaas Yojana, National Social Assistance Programme, Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme, Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme, etc. are admitted, but information sought in such questions should be restricted to State level only. Information about block or district-wise outlays/expenditure/physical targets/achievements of such programmes is primarily the concern of State Governments. Therefore, questions seeking such information at block or district levels are not ordinarily admitted.

Where a reference is made to a member in connection with the notice of a question and no reply is received or a reply received from the member is too late for the consideration of the Speaker, such notice shall be treated as lapsed.

### ***Oral answers to questions***

Rule 44 invests the Speaker with the discretion to direct that a question, though given notice for oral answer, might be put down in the list of questions for written answer, if in her/his opinion, the question is of such nature that a written reply would be more

appropriate. Normally, the following types of questions are admitted as Unstarred Questions:—

- (i) questions seeking information of statistical nature;
- (ii) questions going into details, where it is obvious that the reply will be long *e.g.* questions about resolutions of a conference or recommendations of an expert Committee and action taken thereon, etc.;
- (iii) questions raising matters of local interest;
- (iv) questions relating to strength of staff in Government offices or departments and representation in the service of communities protected under the Constitution in which no question of policy is involved;
- (v) questions on which *prima facie* there could be no scope for supplementaries; and
- (vi) questions of interest only to a limited section of the people.

However, the above types of questions are only illustrative which may be admitted as Unstarred. The Speaker can at her/his discretion admit a question as Unstarred Question for any other reason.

### ***Splitting of Questions***

If a question relates to two or more matters which have no direct connection with one another, the same is split up into separate questions.

### ***Questions on a similar subject***

When there are several notices of questions on a similar subject by different members for the same date, the earlier question according to the priority in ballot, is admitted and names of other members are clubbed thereon.

Only two names can appear on a Starred Question. The names are shown in the order as determined by ballot. There is, however,

no limit on the number of names of members to be clubbed to an Unstarred Question.

### ***Questions addressed to wrong Ministers***

When a question is addressed to a Minister not responsible for the subject matter of the question, the Ministry on receipt of advance notice, moves the concerned Ministry for the acceptance of the question. On receipt of acceptance, the question is transferred by the Secretariat in the name of accepting Ministry for answer on a day allotted to it. If a question is printed in the list of questions, it is usually not transferred subsequently to any other Ministry and the Ministry can take the assistance of the concerned Ministry to whom the subject belongs to answer the question.

### **Question Lists**

Admitted questions are arranged in order of priority obtained by the Member in ballot and the order of preference indicated in the notice, and if no such order is indicated by the member, any one of her/his questions is placed on the list of questions for oral answer in the order in which notices are received in point of time. The total number of questions in a Starred List for a day is 20 and one question in the name of one member. This limit of 20 questions may, however, be exceeded by the number of transferred or postponed questions from the lists of questions of earlier dates that are added to the List. All admitted Starred Questions, which do not find a place in the Starred List of Questions, may be considered for Unstarred List of that day.

The total number of questions in the Unstarred List of any one day does not normally exceed 230. This number may be exceeded by a maximum of 25 questions pertaining to States under President's Rule. The questions which do not find place in the Unstarred List being in excess of 230 questions are treated as lapsed questions. The status of such questions is made available to the members through

the Lok Sabha website. The copies of notices of questions in excess of 230 are provided to the members, if so, requested by them.

Printed Lists of admitted questions are circulated to members five days in advance of the dates on which they are due for answer. Soft copies of lists of questions are also uploaded on the Lok Sabha website <http://loksabha.nic.in> six (06) days prior to the date of answer for the information of the members. In case a member has any objection to her/his name being added to the question of another member(s) or to the contents and form of the question on any account, she/he should inform Secretary General or any senior officer of Question Branch, Lok Sabha Secretariat immediately on receipt of the printed list so that necessary corrigendum can be issued in time. If no such intimation is received immediately after circulation, it is deemed that the concerned member has nothing to say in the matter.

### ***Status of Notices of Questions***

After the lists of questions are printed and circulated to Members and Ministries, the status of each of the notices of questions tabled by the Members is made available on the Members' Portal. Since this information is meant for the use of members only, a login page has been created for the purpose.

### ***Reference to Member***

Where a reference is made to a member in connection with the notice of a question and no reply is received or a reply is received from her/him too late for consideration and the placing of the question, if admitted, on the list of questions for an appropriate date, such notice is deemed to have lapsed.

### ***Mode of Asking Questions***

When the question hour starts, the Speaker calls successively each member in whose name a question appears in the List of Questions for oral answer (Starred Question).

When called by the Speaker, the member rises in her/his place and asks the question by reference to its number on the list of questions. If a question is shown in the name of two members and the first Member is absent, the Speaker calls the second member.

### ***Linking of Questions for Answer***

The Speaker may *suo moto* or at the suggestion of the Minister or any member allow a question or questions on the same or allied subject standing lower in the list of questions for answer along with an earlier question which has reached for oral answer.

### ***No speech or Point of Order during the Question Hour***

No speech is permitted during the Question Hour and no point of order can be raised during Question Hour.

### ***Supplementary Questions***

Any member when called by the Speaker may ask a supplementary question for the purpose of further elucidating any matter of fact. Usually the member in whose name the question stands is allowed to ask two supplementary questions and the second member whose name is clubbed to the question may ask one supplementary. Thereafter, any other member who is able to catch Speaker's eye, is permitted to ask one supplementary. Usually four supplementaries are permitted on a particular question.

The Speaker may disallow any supplementary question if in her/his opinion, it infringes the rules and is irrelevant.

As mentioned above, besides conforming to the rules regarding admission of questions, the supplementary questions should follow the under mentioned general guidelines:—

- (i) Supplementary questions can be asked only when a member has been called by the Chair and it is in the Speaker's discretion to call any member;



- (ii) Supplementary questions should arise out of the main question;
- (iii) Supplementary questions should be specific and relevant;
- (iv) Member should not ask lengthy supplementaries;
- (v) Supplementary questions should not seek opinion of Ministers on a matter; and
- (vi) Supplementary questions should seek information rather than give information.

### ***Starred Questions of absent members***

In the event a member is absent or does not want to ask the question, the Speaker may direct that answer be given and may allow other members to ask supplementaries in view of the importance of the question.

### ***Answering of a Starred Question after Question Hour***

A Starred Question not reached for answer during the Question Hour may be answered after the Question Hour with the permission of the Speaker, if the Minister concerned represents to the Speaker that the question is one of special public interest and she/he desires to give an answer.

### ***Withdrawal and postponement of questions***

If a member has given a notice by 10.00 hours on the day for which her/his question has been placed on the list, to withdraw the question or postpone it to a later day to be specified in the notice subject to the provisions of Rule 38, the member will be allowed to withdraw it or get it postponed. The postponed question(s) will be placed at the end of the list.

In case a question is printed in the Starred List, but the requisite information is not readily available with the Government,

the Minister concerned can request the Speaker for postponement of the question to a subsequent date during the same session. Such a postponed question will have the same priority in the list of Starred Questions for the subsequent date as it had obtained in the date from which it was postponed.

### ***Transfer of Questions***

Transfer of Starred/Unstarred Questions from one date to another is not ordinarily carried out even on receipt of written acceptance from the Ministry concerned where the List of Questions has already been printed. However, in special circumstances, if the Speaker agrees to the proposal, the transfer of such printed questions is carried out through corrigenda. Members/Ministries are informed in writing about transfer of such questions. In case any Starred Question is transferred from one List to another, it is placed at the same position in the List from which it is transferred. Where the transfer is within the same group of Ministries, the date remains unchanged. Only the name of the Ministry is changed.

### ***Disposal of Questions when sitting is cancelled or Question Hour is dispensed with***

When a sitting of the House is cancelled after the lists of questions have been circulated or the House is adjourned for the day before taking up questions, all the questions, both Starred and Unstarred, entered in the Lists of Questions for that day, are treated as Unstarred Questions for the next sitting and their replies are included in the debates of the next day. No fresh lists of such questions are printed but at the next sitting a few copies of the lists marked unstarred are placed in the Library along with the sets of agenda papers for that sitting. However, if the House is adjourned *sine die* before schedule, the questions listed for the remaining days both Starred and Unstarred are treated as lapsed. Similarly, if a

sitting of the House is cancelled before lists of questions for that day have been circulated, the questions tabled for the day stand lapsed.

When the Question Hour of a sitting is dispensed with, but the sitting itself is not cancelled, all Starred Questions for the day are treated as Unstarred and their answers together with the answers to the Unstarred Questions are printed in the debates of the day.

When the Question Hour is dispensed with from a particular date for the rest of the session, all the questions, at whatever stage they may be, are treated as lapsed from that day.

When the last one or more sittings of a session are cancelled, the questions listed for those days also lapse.

***Copies of Answers to Starred and Short Notice Questions placed in PNO/Outer Lobby for Members***

Half-an-hour before the commencement of the Question Hour, a few sets of English and Hindi versions of answers to Starred and Short Notice Questions (SNQs) are placed in the PNO and the Outer Lobby of the Lok Sabha for reference by members only. The contents of answers to such questions including statements, if any, to be laid are treated as confidential and not released for publication until the questions are actually asked and answered in the House. Answers to questions should not be taken as final as the Minister concerned has the right to make corrections therein till the question is actually answered.

The answer should, therefore, be considered as provisional when made available in advance and taken as final in the form in which the question is actually answered with such corrections as may have been made by the Minister.

The soft copies of the replies to Starred Questions are uploaded by the concerned Ministries/Departments on Members' e-portal by 1000 AM on the reply day. This initiative has been taken to facilitate Members to frame supplementaries. The replies

are meant to be accessed by Members only. They may do so *via* the login page created for them and maintain the confidentiality of the replies.

### ***Supply of copies of answers to Members***

After the questions are answered, copies thereof are furnished to Members on request. Such requests should be addressed to the PNO. After the Question Hour is over, replies to Starred as well as Unstarred Questions are available on the Lok Sabha website.

### ***Statements to be laid on the Table of the House in Answers to Questions***

A member in whose name a question stands in the Starred List, or the member/person who has been authorised by the former in writing may obtain a copy of the statement to be laid on the Table in answer to the question and replies to previous Starred/Unstarred or Short Notice Questions referred to therein from the Parliamentary Notice Office half an hour before the commencement of the sitting.

Other members may refer to the statement etc. in the Parliamentary Notice Office. For this purpose, a few sets of the statement and one set of answers to previous questions are placed in the Parliamentary Notice Office.

### ***Statement by Ministers correcting Answers to Questions***

A few copies of statement(s) to be made by Minister correcting answer to earlier Starred/Unstarred and SNQs are placed in PNO half-an-hour before the commencement of the sitting of the House. Members may obtain copies on request or refer to them in the PNO. The contents of the statement should be treated as confidential and not released for publication until the statement is actually made. After the statement has been made, in special case, the Speaker may, at her/his discretion permit a few clarificatory questions which are strictly relevant to the correction made by the Minister.

## **Questions addressed to Private Members**

- (1) A question may be addressed to a Private Member under Rule 40 provided the subject-matter of the question relates to some Bill, Resolution or other matter connected with the business of the House for which that member is responsible.
- (2) The procedure in regard to such questions is the same as is followed in the case of questions addressed to the Ministers. Questions addressed to members, if admitted, are printed on yellow paper and copies thereof are circulated to the members 5 days in advance.
- (3) Short Notice Questions cannot be addressed to Private members.

## **Short Notice Question**

### ***Notice***

The notice for a Short Notice Question should be addressed to the Secretary-General in the prescribed form available in the Parliamentary Notice Office. Brief reasons for asking the question at short notice should invariably be stated at the appropriate place of the form. Where such reasons are not stated, the notice is returned to the member. A general statement that the matter is of "wide public importance" or "public interest", is not considered adequate for this purpose.

The name of the member should be written in block letters below the signature. The member's Division number should also be indicated. Notice bearing stamped signature of the member is treated as unsigned notice. Unsigned notice of Short Notice Question is not accepted and returned to the member. Question written in illegible hand is liable to be returned to the member.

If a notice is signed by more than one member, it will be deemed to have been given by the first signatory only. Each notice of a question may, therefore, be signed by only one member.

## *Admissibility*

Besides being subject to the rules as to the form and content as for ordinary questions, the admissibility of a Short Notice Question is judged on two additional criteria, *viz.*, its subject-matter must be urgent and the Minister concerned should agree to answer it. Therefore, even if the Minister concerned agrees to answer a Short Notice Question, but the Speaker is of opinion that the question is not of an urgent nature, the question cannot be admitted as a 'Short Notice Question'.

The inability of a member to give normal notice due to the remainder of a session being less than 10 days cannot be a valid reason for tabling a Short Notice Question. Similarly, if notice of Short Notice Question is given before the commencement of a session so much in advance that it may be for a day not before the expiry of 10 days, such a question is treated as an ordinary question.

Where necessary, the Minister concerned may be requested to furnish facts to enable the Speaker to decide about the admissibility of the Short Notice Question.

When the Speaker is satisfied that the subject matter of the Short Notice Question is urgent, an enquiry is made from the Minister concerned if she/he is in a position to answer it. If the Minister agrees, a date convenient to the Minister as well as to the member is fixed for answer. An entry is made in the List of Business for the date agreed to by the Minister and member concerned. The text of the admitted Short Notice Question is printed in a separate List on light pink paper in order to distinguish from lists of Starred and Unstarred Questions. It is circulated to members not more than two days before the date for its answer.

When two or more members give Short Notice Question on the same subject and one of them is admitted, names of not more than four members are clubbed to it. A ballot is held to select the members whose names are to be clubbed in case the number exceeds four.

In case members have any objection to their names being added to another member(s) question or to the contents and form of question, they should inform the Secretary-General immediately on receipt of the printed list so that necessary action including issue of corrigendum, etc. may be taken in time.

In case the Minister does not agree to answer Short Notice Question and the Speaker holds that its subject matter is of sufficient public importance to be answered orally in the House, she/he may direct that the question be placed as the first question on the list of Starred Questions for the day on which it would be due for answer in normal course.

When a Short Notice Question of a member is admitted by the Speaker as Starred Question to be placed as the first question in the list of Starred Questions, member's other Starred Question, if already included in the list, will be deleted.

### ***Answering of Short Notice Question***

Normally one Short Notice Question is put down for answer on any one day. After the Question Hour, or if there is no Question Hour as soon as the sitting of Lok Sabha commences and formal business on the agenda, if any, is over, the Speaker calls the member to ask her/his Short Notice Question and Minister to answer. If the first member is absent, the Speaker calls the next member in the list and if none of the members whose names appear for Short Notice Question is present, and no member has been authorised in her/his behalf, the Speaker may direct that the answer to it be given.

Copies of answer to Short Notice Question are placed in the Parliamentary Notice Office as also in the Outer Lobby of the Lok Sabha Chamber for reference by members half an hour before the commencement of the Question Hour for the day for which the Short Notice Question has been put down for answer. The contents of answer should be treated as confidential and not released for

publication until the question is actually asked and answered in the House. The answer should be considered as provisional when made available in advance and taken as final in the form in which the Short Notice Question is actually answered with such corrections as may have been made by the Minister.

The member in whose name the Short Notice Question stands (first name) may ask two supplementaries only and other members may ask one supplementary each only, if permitted by the Chair.

Lok Sabha adjourning without transacting normal business on a particular day, the Short Notice Question admitted for that day is not postponed, but reply to the Short Notice Question is deemed to have been laid on the Table of Lok Sabha on the next sitting and printed in the debates of that day.

### **Half-an-Hour Discussion**

Members have a right to get information from the Government on any matter of public concern by means of questions to Ministers. When members feel that the answer given to a question, Starred or Unstarred or Short Notice, is not complete or does not give the desired information or needs elucidation on a matter of fact, they may be allowed by the Speaker to raise a discussion in the House for half an hour. The procedure is, therefore, termed as 'Half-an-Hour Discussion'.

Half-an-Hour Discussions are generally held on the three sittings in a week; namely, Monday, Wednesday and Friday. While specifying the date of discussion, Members should ensure that the date of discussion falls on any of the above three sittings. In case, where wrong dates are given by the members, the notice will be deemed to have been given for the next available date.

No Half-an-Hour Discussion is fixed on the first day of the session. Half-an-Hour Discussions are also not usually held during the Budget Session till the disposal of financial business.



A member wishing to raise Half-an-Hour Discussion should give notice in writing, in the prescribed printed form available in the Parliamentary Notice Office. The notice should be addressed to the Secretary-General.

While giving notice, the member should indicate in the form at the appropriate places the Question number (in reply to which further elucidation is required), with its date of answer. The point or points desired to be raised for seeking further clarifications should also be specified briefly. The members should write their name in block letters below the signature and should also mention their Division Number.

The member should also indicate in the notice the date on which the discussion is desired to be raised.

A notice is also required to be accompanied by an explanatory note stating the reasons for raising discussion and should also be signed. In cases where such explanatory notes are not furnished by the members, the notices are returned to them.

### ***Notice for raising Discussion***

Notices for raising Half-an-Hour Discussions should normally be given within 3 days of answering a question and at least 3 days in advance of the day on which the discussion is desired to be raised. The Speaker may, with the consent of the Minister concerned, waive the requirement concerning the period of notice.

Notices for raising Half-an-Hour Discussions are received in the Parliamentary Notice Office. A Notice Box is placed outside Parliamentary Notice Office to enable members to deposit notices during hours when Parliamentary Notice Office is closed.

If the notice is signed by more than one member, it is deemed to have been signed by the first signatory only. Each notice may, therefore, be signed by only one member.

A notice admitted and put down in the List of Business during the last week of a session, but is not taken up for want of time may be revived by the member in the next session provided a fresh notice is given within one week of the commencement of the next session. Its inclusion in the List of Business will however, depend on its securing precedence in the ballot as per normal procedure.

### ***Conditions of Admissibility***

The following conditions are required to be fulfilled for the admissibility of Half-an-Hour Discussion:

- (i) It should be based on an answer to a recent question in Lok Sabha;
- (ii) It should be intended to get elucidation on matters of fact and should not seek to revise the policy of Government;
- (iii) It should relate to a matter of sufficient public importance.

If a notice is admitted and put down in the List of Business, the discussion is normally limited to half-an-hour and is held in the last half-an-hour of a sitting.

### ***Inclusion of Discussion on Agenda***

All notices of Half-an-Hour Discussions admitted for a particular day, are balloted and the notice which secures first priority in ballot is put down for discussion. The discussion is put down on the relevant date in the name of the member, who has secured first priority in the ballot.

In case the member, whose notice of Half-an-Hour Discussion has secured first priority in ballot, is not likely to be present on the relevant date, the notice which has secured second priority in ballot is put down for discussion.

The member and the Ministry concerned are informed as soon as a discussion is fixed for a particular date.

In respect of other notices which fail to secure first priority, the members concerned are informed that their notices had not secured the priority and hence are not being included in the List of Business on the date specified by them. The members concerned are also informed that they may, if so desire, revive their notices specifying fresh date.

Normally, only one Half-an-Hour Discussion is put down for a sitting. Further, not more than one such discussion is put down in the name of any one member in a week. Also not more than two Half-an-Hour Discussions may be raised by one member in the same session. Therefore, if a member has raised such discussion once, the other notice(s) by the member will not be balloted for the remaining sitting(s) of the week. Likewise, where a member has already raised two Half-an-Hour discussions, the other notices by the same member during the same session will not be balloted.

On the day for which the discussion is placed on the agenda, at the appointed time (usually 5.30 p.m.), the member in whose name it stands in the agenda makes a short statement and members not exceeding four, who have previously intimated to the Speaker before the commencement of the sitting and have secured precedence in the ballot, are permitted to ask a question each for further elucidation on any matter of fact. Thereafter the Minister concerned replies briefly. There is neither a formal motion before the House nor voting. If a member, who has secured one of the first four places in the ballot, is absent, no other member is permitted to ask the question in that place.

If a Half-an-Hour Discussion included in the List of Business for particular sitting, is not disposed of at the sitting, it is not set down for any further sitting unless the member so desires, and in the latter case, it has to go through the ballot, if more than one notice is admitted for that sitting.

## ***General***

The Speaker may postpone Half-an-Hour Discussion to some other day, if the House decides to dispose of an urgent business instead of the Half-an-Hour Discussion included in the List of Business.

When a discussion is interrupted for want of quorum or when there is no time for the Minister to give a full reply to the debate, the Minister may, with the permission of the Speaker, lay a statement on the Table of the House.

*[Half-an-Hour Discussions are governed by Rule 55 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha and Direction 19 of the Directions by the Speaker, Lok Sabha.]*