

## **REFERENCE MATERIAL (GENERAL KNOWLEDGE) FOR CLASS 11th AND 12th**

**Please Note** - Students of class 11th and 12th are advised to refer to the reference material (general knowledge) of Class 6th-8th and 9th-10th also in addition to the material provided below. This material is **only** for reference. Students are encouraged to also read from other sources.

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<sup>1</sup> **Source** - Election Commission of India

<sup>2</sup> **Source** - Press and Public Relations, Lok Sabha Secretariat, Parliament of India

<sup>3</sup> **Source** - Press and Public Relations, Lok Sabha Secretariat, Parliament of India

<sup>4</sup> **Source** - Lok Sabha, Parliament of India

<sup>5</sup> **Source** - Press and Public Relations, Lok Sabha Secretariat, Parliament of India

<sup>6</sup> **Source** - India Yearbook 2022, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India

<sup>7</sup> **Source** - Gaurav Newsletter (1st ed.), PRIDE, Lok Sabha Secretariat, Parliament of India

## **PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS<sup>1</sup>**

Under the Constitution of India, there shall always be a President of India (See Article 52 of the Constitution). He holds the highest elective office in the country. The President holds office for a period of five years from the date on which he enters upon his office.

### **Q.1 Who elects the President of India?**

Answer: The President is elected by an Electoral College, which consists of the elected members of both Houses of Parliament and the elected members of the Legislative Assemblies of all the States and also of NCT of Delhi and the Union Territory of Puducherry. [Article 54 of the Constitution of India]

### **Q.2 What is the term of the office of the President?**

Answer: The President shall hold office for a term of 5 years from the date on which he enters upon his office. He shall, however, continue to hold office notwithstanding the expiry of his term, until his successor enters upon his office. [Article 56 of the Constitution of India]

### **Q.3 When is the election of the Office of President of India held?**

Answer: Under the provisions of sub-section (3) of Section 4 of the Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections Act, 1952, the notification calling the election to the office of the President can be issued by the Election Commission on any day within the period of sixty days before the expiry of the term of office of the outgoing President. The election schedule shall be so fixed, that the President-elect is able to enter upon his office on the day following the expiry of the term of the outgoing President.

### **Q.4 Who conducts the election to the Office of President of India?**

Answer: Under Article 324 of the Constitution of India, the authority to conduct elections to the Office of President is vested in the Election Commission of India.

### **Q.5 What electoral system/process is followed for the election to the office of the President?**

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<sup>1</sup> *Source* - Election Commission of India  
(<https://eci.gov.in/faqs/elections/presidential-election/faqs-presidential-election-r9/>)

Answer: As per Article 55(3) of the Constitution of India, the election of the President shall be held in accordance with the system of proportional representation by means of single transferable vote and the voting at such election shall be by secret ballot.

**Q.6 What are the Qualifications required by a candidate to contest the election to the Office of the President of India?**

Answer: Under Article 58, a candidate should fulfill the following eligibility conditions to contest the election to the Office of President: -

1. Must be a citizen of India,
2. Must have completed 35 years of age,
3. Must be eligible to be a member of the Lok Sabha,
4. Should not be holding any office of profit under the Government of India or the Government of any State or under any local or other authority subject to the control of any of the said Governments.

However, the candidate may be holding the office of President or Vice-President or Governor of any State or Ministers of the Union or any State and shall be eligible to contest election.

**Q.7 What is the colour and form of ballot papers used in the election to the office of the President?**

Answer: The Election Commission has directed that the ballot papers should be printed in 2 (two) colours- in green for use by Members of Parliament and in pink for use by the Members of the State Legislative Assemblies. The ballot papers are printed with two columns-first column containing the names of the candidates and the second column for marking preferences by the elector for each such candidate. The ballot papers are printed in Hindi and English for use by MPs and in the official language(s) of the State and in English for use by the MLAs of the State concerned.

**Q.8 Is the value of vote of each elector the same?**

Answer: No. The value of votes of MLAs would differ from State to State as the value of each such vote is calculated by the process explained below. However, the value of votes of all MPs is the same.

**Q.9 How is the value of votes of members of the Electoral College calculated?**

Answer: The value of votes of electors is basically determined on the basis of population of the States in accordance with the manner laid down in Article 55(2) of the Constitution. The value of the vote of each member of a State Legislative Assembly included in the Electoral College is calculated by dividing the population of the State concerned (as per 1971 Census) by the total number of elected members of the Assembly, and then further dividing the quotient by 1000. If the remainder, while so dividing is 500 or more, then the value is increased by '1'. Total Value of votes of all members of each State Assembly is worked out by multiplying the number of elective seats in the Assembly by the number of votes for each member in the respective State. The total value of votes of all the States worked out as above in respect of each State and added together is divided by the total number of elected members of Parliament (Lok Sabha 543+Rajya Sabha 233) to get the value of votes of each Member of Parliament.

**Q.10 What is the manner/procedure for recording votes at an election to the office of President?**

Answer: In accordance with the system of proportional representation by means of single transferable vote, every elector can mark as many preferences, as there are candidates contesting the election. These preferences for the candidates are to be marked by the elector, by placing the figures 1,2,3, 4, 5 and so on, against the names of the candidates, in the order of preference, in the space provided in column 2 of the ballot paper.

**Q.11 Is the winner in a Presidential election elected on the basis of obtaining simple majority? Or by securing a specified quota of votes?**

Answer: As the Presidential election is held in accordance with the system of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote, every elector has as many preferences as candidates contesting the elections. The winning candidate has to secure the required quota of votes to be declared elected, i.e., 50% of valid votes polled +1.

**Q.12 Can the result of the election to the Office of President be challenged?**

Answer: Yes. An election to the Office of the President can be called in question by means of an election petition presented to the Supreme Court after the election is over.



## Our Parliament



Lok Sabha Secretariat  
New Delhi

# Our Parliament

The Parliament of India, representing as it does all politically organized shades of public opinion at the national level, occupies a pre-eminent and pivotal position in the country's constitutional set-up. It has also, over the years, carved out for itself a unique place in the esteem and affection of the people as the forum through which they articulate and realize their grievances and aspirations and seek solutions to their problems.

The Constitution of India provides for a bicameral Parliament consisting of the President and two Houses known as the Council of States (Rajya Sabha) and the House of the People (Lok Sabha).

## RAJYA SABHA

The Rajya Sabha is to consist of not more than 250 Members. Of these 12 are nominated by the President from amongst persons having special knowledge or practical experience in respect of such matters as literature, science, art or social service. The remaining seats are allocated to the various States and Union territories, roughly in proportion to their population; each State is, however, represented by at least one member. The representatives of a State are elected by the elected Members of the Legislative Assembly of that State in accordance with the system of proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote. The minimum age for membership of the House is 30 years.

The Rajya Sabha was constituted for the first time on 3 April 1952 and had its first Session on 13 May 1952. It is a permanent body and is not subject to dissolution, but one-third of its Members retire every second year by rotation and are replaced by newly-elected Members. The term of an individual Member of Rajya Sabha is six years. The Rajya Sabha at present consists of 245 Members: 233 represent the States and Union territories and 12 are nominated Members.

## **LOK SABHA**

The Lok Sabha is composed of representatives of the people chosen by direct election on the basis of adult suffrage. The maximum strength of the House envisaged by the Constitution is 552: upto 530 Members to represent the States, upto 20 Members to represent the Union territories and not more than two Members of the Anglo-Indian community to be nominated by the President of India if the President is of opinion that the community is not adequately represented in the House. The total elective membership is distributed among the States in such manner that the ratio between the number of seats allotted to each State and the population of the State is, so far as practicable, the same for all States. The qualifying age for membership of the Lok Sabha is 25 years.

The Lok Sabha, unless sooner dissolved, continues for five years from the date appointed for its first meeting and the expiration of the period of five years operates as dissolution of the House. However, while a Proclamation of Emergency is in operation, this period may be extended by Parliament by law for a period not exceeding one year at a time and not extending in any case beyond a period of six months after the Proclamation has ceased to operate.

Following the first General Elections held in the country in 1952, the First Lok Sabha was constituted on 17 April, 1952 and met on 13 May, 1952.

The Second Lok Sabha came into being in April 1957; the Third Lok Sabha in April, 1962; the Fourth Lok Sabha in March, 1967; the Fifth Lok Sabha in March, 1971; the Sixth Lok Sabha in March, 1977; the Seventh Lok Sabha in January, 1980; the Eighth Lok Sabha in December, 1984; the Ninth Lok Sabha in December, 1989; the Tenth Lok Sabha in June, 1991; the Eleventh Lok Sabha in May, 1996; the Twelfth Lok Sabha in March, 1998; the Thirteenth Lok Sabha in October, 1999; the Fourteenth Lok Sabha in May, 2004; and the Fifteenth Lok Sabha in May, 2009.

The Lok Sabha at present consists of 545 Members, including two nominated Members.

## **SESSIONS**

Normally, three Sessions of Parliament are held in a year: (i) Budget Session (February-May); (ii) Monsoon Session (July-August); and (iii) Winter Session (November-December).

With the unprecedented growth of governmental activities over the years, Parliament had been finding it difficult to discuss the Demands for Grants of all the Ministries; consequently, budgetary allocations of various Ministries were being passed without debate. With a view to ensuring greater financial accountability, it was decided in 1993 to constitute Departmentally Related Standing Committees to examine Demands for Grants of various Ministries and report to the House. In order to enable these Committees to examine the Demands for Grants, the Budget Session has been, since 1994, divided into two parts. After the General Discussion on the Budget is over and the Vote on Account is passed, the House is adjourned for about one month. The Departmentally Related Standing Committees examine the Demands for Grants of Ministries/Departments during this period and their Reports are presented to the House when it reconvenes after the recess, which constitutes the second part of the Budget Session.

## **Functions**

As in other parliamentary democracies, the Parliament in India has the cardinal functions of legislation, overseeing of administration, passing of the Budget, ventilation of public grievances, discussing national policies, etc.

The scheme of distribution of powers between the Union and the States, followed in the Constitution of India, emphasises in many ways the general predominance of Parliament in the legislative field. Apart from the wide range of subjects allotted to it in the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution, even in normal times Parliament can, under certain circumstances, assume legislative power over a subject falling within the sphere exclusively reserved for the States.

Further, in times of grave emergency when the security of India or any part thereof is threatened by war or external aggression or

armed rebellion, and a Proclamation of Emergency is made by the President, Parliament acquires the power to make laws for the whole or any part of the territory of India with respect to any of the matters enumerated in the State List. Similarly, in the event of the failure of the constitutional machinery in a State, the powers of the Legislature of that State become exercisable by or under the authority of Parliament.

Besides the power to legislate on a very wide field, the Constitution vests in the Union Parliament the constituent power or the power to initiate amendment of the Constitution.

Under the Constitution, the Union Council of Ministers is collectively responsible to the Lok Sabha. One of the effective methods by which Parliament exercises check over the Executive is through its control over finance. This financial power in the hands of Parliament helps in securing Executive accountability. Besides, the procedures of Parliament afford ample opportunities for the enforcement of Ministerial responsibility, for assessing and influencing governmental policies as well as for ventilating public grievances. The procedure of Questions, with possibilities of supplementaries, and, in case of inconclusive or unsatisfactory answer, of Half-an-Hour Discussions, Calling Attentions, Motions, Short Duration Discussions, Matters Under Rule 377, etc. enable information to be elicited and attention focussed on various aspects of governmental activities.

The more significant occasions for review of administration are provided by the discussions on the Motion of Thanks on the Address by the President, the Budget, including Demands for Grants from various Ministries and Departments, and the proposals to raise funds to meet the expenditure. These apart, specific matters may be discussed through motions on matters of urgent public importance, private members' resolutions and other substantive motions. In extreme cases, the Government can be censured or a motion of no-confidence can be moved against them. Along with these, a close and continuous check on governmental activities is exercised through a comprehensive system of Parliamentary Committees.

## **Relative Roles of the two Houses**

As between the two Houses, the Lok Sabha has supremacy in financial matters. It is also the House to which the Council of Ministers, drawn from both Houses, is collectively responsible.

On the other hand, the Rajya Sabha has a special role in enabling Parliament to legislate on a State subject if it is necessary in the national interest. It has a similar power in regard to the creation of an All-India Service common to the Union and the States. In other respects, the Constitution proceeds on the theory of equality of status of the two Houses.

Disagreement between the two Houses on amendments to a Bill is resolved by both the Houses meeting in a joint sitting where questions are decided by majority vote. However, this provision of joint sitting does not apply to Money Bills and Constitution Amendment Bills.

## **The Presiding Officers**

In the Lok Sabha, both the Presiding Officers—the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker—are elected from amongst its Members. In the Rajya Sabha, the Vice-President of India is the *ex officio* Chairman. He is elected by the Members of an electoral college consisting of the Members of both the Houses of Parliament in accordance with the system of proportional representation by means of a single transferable vote. The Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha is, however, elected by the Members of the Rajya Sabha from amongst themselves.

The Constitution of India makes certain specific provisions in regard to the office of the Speaker of Lok Sabha, laying particular emphasis on the importance and the independent character of the office in the context of a parliamentary polity. Her/His salary and allowances are charged on the Consolidated Fund of India.

The Speaker of Lok Sabha enjoys vast authority and powers under the Constitution and the Rules, as well as inherently. As the conventional head of the Lok Sabha and as its principal spokesman, the Speaker represents its collective voice. She/he is the guardian of the rights and privileges of the House, its Committees and Members. It is through the Speaker that the decisions of the

House are communicated to outside individuals and authorities; she/he issues warrants to execute the orders of the House, wherever necessary, and delivers reprimands on behalf of the House. Within the precincts of the House, her/his authority is supreme. Her/his conduct cannot be discussed, except on a substantive motion.

All the Committees of the House function under her/his overall directions and their Chairpersons are nominated by her/him. Any procedural problems in the functioning of the Committees are referred to her/him for directions. Committees like the Business Advisory Committee, the General Purposes Committee and the Rules Committee, however, work directly under her/his Chairmanship.

The Speaker enjoys a special position insofar as the relations between the two Houses of Parliament in certain matters are concerned. She/he certifies Money Bills and decides finally what are "money" matters by reason of the Lok Sabha's over-riding powers in financial matters. It is the Lok Sabha Speaker who presides over joint sittings called in the event of a disagreement between the two Houses on a legislative measure.

#### **Leader of the House**

The Prime Minister, who is the Leader of the majority party in the Lok Sabha, functions as the Leader of the House in the Lok Sabha except when he is not a member of the Lok Sabha. The seniormost Minister, who is a Member of the Rajya Sabha, is appointed by the Prime Minister as the Leader of the House in Rajya Sabha.

In 1966, 1997 and in 2004 the appointment of a Prime Minister who was a Member of the Rajya Sabha necessitated the appointment of a separate Leader of the House in the Lok Sabha. In July, 1991 and again in 1996, at the time of constitution of the Tenth and the Eleventh Lok Sabhas, respectively, the Prime Minister who was not a Member of either House of Parliament, nominated another Minister as the Leader of the House in the Lok Sabha as well as in the Rajya Sabha.

The Leader of the House is an important parliamentary functionary and exercises direct influence on the course of business. The whole

policy of the Government, especially insofar as it is expressed in the inner life of the House and in measures dealing with the course of its business, is concentrated in her/his person.

The arrangement of Government business is the ultimate responsibility of the Leader of the House. He makes proposals for the dates of summoning and prorogation of the House for the approval of the Speaker. She/he has to draw up the programme of official business to be transacted in a Session of Parliament; she/he also fixes *inter se* priorities for various items of business to ensure their smooth passage. Besides, she/he deals with procedural matters relating to the business of the House and advises the House in case any difficulty arises. The Leader of the House normally occupies the first seat in the Chamber at the right side of the Chair except in cases when she/he is not the Prime Minister.

### **Leader of the Opposition**

Prior to the 1977 General Elections to the Lok Sabha, except for a brief spell of one year (December, 1969–December, 1970), there had been no official ‘Opposition’ in the sense the term is used in the parliamentary system of Government. In November 1969, for the first time since Independence, the Lok Sabha had a recognised Opposition party and a Leader of the Opposition. Similarly, in the Rajya Sabha also, until 1969, there was no Leader of the Opposition in the real and accepted sense of that expression.

The Leaders of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha and the Lok Sabha are now accorded statutory recognition and given salary and certain other facilities and amenities under the Salary and Allowances of Leaders of Opposition in Parliament Act, 1977. The Leader of the Opposition occupies a seat in the front row left to the Chair. She/he also enjoys certain privileges on ceremonial occasions like escorting the Speaker-elect to the rostrum and a seat in the front row at the time of the Address by the President to Members of both the Houses of Parliament.

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LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT  
NEW DELHI

MAY, 2014

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\*Cover Photo: Parliament of India



## QUESTION HOUR IN LOK SABHA



## **QUESTION HOUR IN LOK SABHA**

Generally, the first hour of a sitting of the Lok Sabha is devoted to Questions and that hour is called the Question Hour. It has a special significance in the proceedings of Parliament. Asking questions is an inherent and unfettered parliamentary right of Members. It is during the Question Hour that Members can ask questions on every aspect of administration and governmental activity. Government policies in the national as well as international spheres come into sharp focus as the Members try to elicit pertinent information during the Question Hour.

The Government is put on trial during the Question Hour and every Minister whose turn it is to answer Questions has to stand up and answer for the administration's acts of omission and commission. At the same time, through the Question Hour, the Government is able to quickly feel the pulse of the nation and adopt its policies and actions accordingly. It is through questions in Parliament that the Government remains in touch with the people inasmuch as Members are enabled to ventilate grievances of the public in matters concerning the administration.

Questions enable Ministries to gauge popular reaction to their policies and administration; questions also bring to the notice of the Ministers many an abuse which otherwise would have gone unnoticed. Sometimes, questions may lead to the appointment of a commission, a court of enquiry or even a legislation when matters raised are grave enough to agitate the public mind and are of wide public importance.

### **Types of Questions**

Questions are of four types: Starred, Unstarred, Short Notice Questions and Questions addressed to Private Members.

A Starred Question is one to which a Member desires an oral answer in the House and which is distinguished by an asterisk mark. When a question is answered orally, supplementary questions can be asked thereon. Only 20 questions can be listed for oral answer on a day.

An Unstarred Question is one which is not called for oral answer in the House and on which no supplementary questions can consequently be asked. To such a question, a written answer is deemed to have been laid on the Table after the Question Hour by the Minister to whom it is addressed. It is printed in the official report of the sitting of the House for which it is put down. Only 230 questions can be listed for written answer on a day. In addition, 25 more questions can also be included in the Unstarred List relating to States under President's Rule and the total number of questions in the list of Unstarred Questions for a day may not exceed 255 in relaxation of the normal limit of 230 questions.

A Short Notice Question is one which relates to a matter of urgent public importance and can be asked with a shorter notice than the period of notice prescribed for an ordinary question. Like a Starred Question, it is answered orally, followed by supplementary questions.

The Question to a Private Member is addressed to the Member herself/himself and it is asked when the subject-matter of it pertains to any Bill, Resolution or any matter relating to the Business of the House for which that Member is responsible. For such questions, the same procedure is followed as in the case of questions addressed to a Minister with such variations as the Speaker may consider necessary or convenient.

The List of Starred, Unstarred, Short Notice Questions and Questions to Private Members are printed in green, white, light pink and yellow colour, respectively, to distinguish them from one another.

### **Notices of Questions**

A Member gives notice in writing addressed to the Secretary-General, Lok Sabha, intimating one's intention to ask a question. Besides the text of the question, the notice states clearly the official designation of the Minister to whom the question is addressed, the date on which the answer is desired, as also the order of preference, in the event when a Member tables more than one notice of questions for the same day.

A Member is 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, are considered for subsequent day(s) concerning that Minister(s) during the period of that session only.

The normal period of notice of a question is not less than fifteen clear days. However, the Speaker can relax the required minimum notice period of fifteen clear days to protect the interest of the Members. A Short Notice Question can be asked with a notice shorter than ten days but the Member has to state briefly the reasons for asking the question at such short notice.

### **Procedure in Lok Sabha Secretariat**

On receipt of the notice of a question, it is scrutinized to see that the designation of the Minister and date of answer have been correctly mentioned in the notice. A computerized auto ballot is then held in respect of notices received in the Secretariat at the same time to determine their *inter se* priority. Separate ballots are held for Starred and Unstarred Questions. Starred, Unstarred and Short Notice Questions are numbered separately and entered in separate diaries on the computer software.

The next stage is to examine the notices of questions in the light of Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha, Directions by the Speaker, provisions of the Constitution of India and past precedents. A question is primarily asked for the purpose of obtaining information on a matter of public importance. Questions that contain arguments, inferences or defamatory statements or otherwise refer to the character or conduct of any person except in her/his official or public capacity, are not admitted. Questions which are in substance repetitions of those that have been answered previously or in regard to which information is available in accessible documents or in ordinary works of reference are also not admitted. Besides, if the subject matter of a question

is pending for judgement before any court of law or any other tribunal or body set up under Law or is under consideration before a Parliamentary Committee, the same is not permitted to be asked. Questions making discourteous references to foreign countries with whom India has friendly relations are disallowed. Similarly, questions raising larger issues of policy are not allowed, for it is not possible to enunciate policies within the limited compass of an answer to a question. Questions containing more than 150 words or relating to a matter which is not primarily the concern of the Government of India are not admitted. Questions going into minor details of administration and day-to-day working of the Government/ Organisations are also not permitted.

Keeping the above rules and precedents in view, a question is admitted or disallowed. Typed copies of the admitted and edited questions are then made out on a standard form. An advance copy of the admitted question is sent online to the Ministry/ Department concerned so that they may, on their side, initiate action for collection of information asked for in the question to prepare a reply.

A Short Notice Question which is of wide public importance is first referred to the Ministry concerned, if necessary, for furnishing factual information in the matter and also for indicating whether the Minister concerned accepts the short notice and, if so, the date convenient to her/ him to answer the question. If the Minister accepts the short notice and the matter sought to be raised is considered urgent by the Speaker, the Short Notice Question is admitted and printed in a separate list in light pink paper in order to distinguish it from the lists of ordinary questions. The Short Notice Question is taken up after the Question Hour.

### **Allotment of Days for Questions**

Immediately on fixation of the dates of the sittings of a session of Lok Sabha, allotment of the days for the answering of questions relating to various Ministries of the Government of India is made.

For this purpose, the Ministries are divided into five Groups and fixed days are allotted to groups of Ministries during the week. There is no Question Hour on Saturday, even if a sitting is fixed for that day.

Separate lists are prepared for Starred and Unstarred Questions which have been admitted. Admitted questions are entered in the List of Questions for the day for oral or written answers, as the case may be, in the order of priority obtained in ballot with the orders of the Speaker. Not more than five questions are admitted in the name of a Member for each sitting of which not more than one is put down for oral answer. While compiling the list of Unstarred Questions, care is taken to see that one question of each Member is included in the List of Questions of that date. The remaining Unstarred Questions are thereafter put in the list according to *inter se* priority obtained in the ballot. A serial number is allotted to each question. Normally, not more than twenty questions are placed on the List of Questions for oral answers and not more than two hundred and thirty questions are placed on the List of Questions for written answers on any one day. The Ministries are supplied with the lists of finally admitted questions at least 5 days before the date fixed for asking the questions. The soft copies of list of questions are available on the website of Lok Sabha i.e., <http://loksabha.nic.in>, six days prior to the date of answer.

A Member whose question has been admitted and which is included in the List of Questions for oral answer for a particular day, rises in one's place when the turn of the question comes and asks the question by reading out its number on the List of Questions. The Minister concerned answers the question. Thereafter, the Member who had asked the question can ask only two supplementary questions. After that, the second Member whose name is clubbed on the question is allowed to ask one supplementary question. Thereafter, the Speaker may allow one supplementary each to Members who are able to catch the Speaker's eye. However, the number of supplementaries permitted on a starred question depends upon the relative importance of the question. The Speaker accordingly exercises the discretion in permitting supplementaries. Thereafter, the next question is taken up. The replies to questions not reached for oral answer during the Question Hour are deemed to have been laid on the Table of the Lok Sabha along with the replies to written answers.

If on a question being called is not asked or the Member in whose name it stands is absent, the Speaker may direct that the answer to it be given.

At the end of the Question Hour, *i.e.* after the questions for oral answer have been answered, Short Notice Question, if any, for that day is taken up and disposed of in the same way as questions for oral answers.

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

Where answer to a question, whether Starred or Unstarred, needs elucidation on a matter of fact, any Member can table a notice for raising a Half-an-Hour Discussion thereon. If the notice is admitted and gets priority in ballot, such a discussion may be allowed by the Speaker. Normally, such discussions are held on three days in a week, *viz.*, Monday, Wednesday and Friday, except in Budget Session when such discussion is normally not held till the financial business is completed. The discussion is usually held from 1730 to 1800 hours, *i.e.* the last half-an-hour of the day's proceedings. Initiating the discussion, the Member who has given notice makes a short statement and not more than four other Members, who have given advance notice before 1100 hours on the day on which discussion is to be held, are permitted to ask a question each for further elucidation of any matter of fact. Thereafter, the Minister concerned replies.

### **Telecasting of Question Hour**

The Question Hour is an interesting part of the parliamentary proceedings. Although a question mainly seeks information and tries to elicit facts on a particular subject, many a times lively and quicksilver repartees occur between the Members asking the questions and the Ministers answering them. These repartees are sometimes coupled with flashes of wit and humour. That is why the Public Galleries and the Press Galleries are packed to capacity during the Question Hour.

With a view to familiarizing the public at large about the manner in which the proceedings of the Houses of Parliament are conducted in the Question Hour and how their representatives raise various issues of national/international importance, proceedings of the Question Hour in Lok Sabha were telefilmed on 2 December, 1991 and telecast on the following day in the morning. Earlier, the pre-recorded proceedings of the Question Hour

were telecast by *Doordarshan* on the following day in the morning. From 7 December, 1994, the proceedings of the Question Hour of both the Houses were telecast live on alternate weeks throughout the country on the national channel of *Doordarshan* from 1100 hrs. to 1200 hrs. All India Radio is also broadcasting the proceedings of the Question Hour of both the Houses from 2200 hrs. to 2300 hrs. the same night on their national network. It has been arranged in such a manner that during the telecast of the Question Hour of one House by *Doordarshan*, the Question Hour of the Other House is broadcast by All India Radio.

With the setting up of the LSTV Channel, the live coverage of Lok Sabha proceedings is being done by this Channel. As per practice, the proceedings of Question Hour in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha are telecast 'Live'/broadcast on Doordarshan/All India Radio on their national Channels on alternate weeks. While telecasting Question Hour of one House on the national channel, *Doordarshan* telecasts live the Question Hour of the other House on DD News Channel. If one House is adjourned for any reason, both channels cover the other House. DD News Channel, however switches over to other important news items temporarily, if it happens during live telecast of Question Hour.

LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT  
NEW DELHI  
MAY, 2019  
LARRDIS/No.30/1/2019/PPR

## **ZERO HOUR - AN INDIAN INNOVATION<sup>1</sup>**

### **What is 'Zero Hour' ?**

**Answer.** The time immediately following the Question Hour and laying of papers and before any listed business is taken up in the House has come to be popularly known as the 'Zero Hour'. As it starts around 12 noon, this period is euphemistically termed as 'Zero Hour'. For raising matters during the 'Zero Hour' in Lok Sabha, Members give notice between 8.30 a.m. and 9.00 a.m. everyday to the Speaker stating clearly the subject which they consider to be important and wish to raise in the House. It is, of course, for the Speaker to allow or not to allow for raising such matters in the House. The term 'Zero Hour' is not formally recognised in our parliamentary procedure.

### **How many matters are allowed to be raised under 'Zero Hour' ?**

**Answer.** At present, twenty matters per day as per their priority in the ballot are allowed to be raised during "Zero Hour". The order in which the matters will be raised is decided by the Speaker at his/her discretion. In the first phase, 5 matters of urgent national and international importance, as decided by the Chair, are taken up after Question Hour and laying of papers, etc. In the second phase, the remaining admitted matters of urgent public importance are taken up after 6.00 P.M. or at the end of the regular business of the House. However, since there is no provision in the rules regarding 'Zero Hour', hence there is no maximum limit on the number of matters that can be raised on any given day.

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<sup>1</sup> **Source** - Lok Sabha, Parliament of India (<http://loksabhap.nic.in/FAQ.aspx>)



## BUDGET IN PARLIAMENT



## **BUDGET IN PARLIAMENT**

Governments today have come to look after virtually every sphere of human life. They have to perform manifold functions from maintaining law and order, protecting their territories to implementation of plans for economic and social betterment. Besides, they provide a variety of social services like education, health, employment and housing to the people. Needless to say, Government requires adequate resources to discharge these functions effectively.

Where is this money to come from and who is to sanction the funds? The necessary funds are mobilised from the country's resources by way of taxes-both direct and indirect, and loans- both long-term and short-term, to meet the governmental expenditure. In India, the principal sources of revenue are customs and excise duties and income-tax on individuals and companies.

### **Need for Budget**

It is not as if the Government can tax, borrow and spend money the way it likes. Since there is a limit to the resources, the need for proper budgeting arises to allocate scarce resources to various governmental activities. Every item of expenditure has to be well thought out and total outlay worked out for a specific period. Prudent spending is essential for the stability of a Government and proper earnings are a pre-requisite to wise spending. Hence, planned expenditure and accurate foresight of earnings are the sine-qua-non of sound governmental finance.

### **Parliamentary Control over Finance**

Ours is a parliamentary system of Government based on the Westminster model. The Constitution has, therefore, vested the power over the purse in the hands of chosen representatives of the people, thus sanctifying the principle 'no taxation without representation'.

Preparation of Budget for the approval of the Legislature is a constitutional obligation of the Government, both at the Centre and the State levels. Legislative prerogative over taxation, legislative control over expenditure and executive initiative in financial matters are some of the fundamental principles of the system of parliamentary financial control. There are specific provisions in the Constitution of India incorporating these tenets. For example, Article 265 provides that 'no tax shall be levied or collected except by authority of law'; no expenditure can be incurred except with the authorisation of the Legislature (Article 266); and President shall, in respect of every financial year, cause to be laid before Parliament, Annual Financial Statement (Article 112). These provisions of our Constitution make the Government accountable to Parliament.

### **The Budget**

The 'Annual Financial Statement' laid before both the Houses of Parliament constitutes the Budget of the Union Government. This statement takes into account a period of one Financial Year. The Financial Year in India commences on 1st April each year. The statement embodies the estimated receipts and expenditure of the Government of India for the Financial Year.

## **Demands for Grants**

The estimates of expenditure included in the Budget and required to be voted by Lok Sabha are in the form of Demands for Grants. These Demands are arranged Ministry-wise and a separate Demand for each of the major services is presented. Each Demand contains first a statement of the total grant and then a statement of the detailed estimate divided into items.

## **Presentation**

In India, the Budget is presented to Parliament on such date as is fixed by the President.

Till 2016, the Budget used to be presented in two parts, *viz.*, the Railway Budget and the General Budget. From the year 2017-18, the Railway Budget was merged with the General Budget and a single document is presented by the Minister of Finance.

The Budget speech of the Finance Minister is usually in two parts. Part A deals with general economic survey of the country while Part B relates to taxation proposals. By convention the General Budget was presented at 11 A.M. on the last working day of February, *i.e.* about a month before the commencement of the Financial Year except in the year when General Elections to Lok Sabha are held. In an election year, Budget may be presented twice—first to secure Vote on Account for a few months and later in full. However from 2017-18, the date of presentation of Budget has been advanced to 1<sup>st</sup> February.

The Union Budget is presented in Lok Sabha by the Minister of Finance, who makes a speech introducing the Budget and it is only in the concluding part of the speech that the proposals for fresh taxation or for variations in the existing taxes are disclosed. The ‘Annual Financial Statement’ is laid on the Table of Rajya Sabha at the conclusion of the speech of the Finance Minister in Lok Sabha.

## **Budget Documents**

Along with the ‘Annual Financial Statement’, the Government presents the following documents: an Explanatory Memorandum briefly explaining the nature of receipts and expenditure during the current year and the next year and the reasons for variations in the estimates for the two years, the Books of Demands showing the provisions Ministry-wise and a separate Demand for each Department and service of the Ministry. The Finance Bill which deals with the taxation measures proposed by Government is introduced immediately after the presentation of Budget. It is accompanied by a memorandum explaining the provisions of the Bill and their effect on the finances of the country.

## **Vote on Account**

Prior to 2017, the Budget used to be presented on last working day of February. Accordingly, the Parliament was not able to vote the entire budget before the commencement of the new Financial year. Due to necessity to keep enough finance at the disposal of Government in order to allow it to run the administration of the country, Government obtained Vote on Account from Parliament.

The Vote on Account was used to be obtained for two months only. But during an election year or when it was anticipated that the main Demands and Appropriation Bill will take longer time than two months, the Vote on Account was obtained for a period exceeding two months.

However, with the advancement of the date of presentation of Budget, since 2017-18, the Budget enables Parliament to avoid a Vote on Account and pass a single Appropriation Bill before the close of the Financial Year.

## **Discussion**

The Budget is discussed in two stages in Lok Sabha. First, there is the General Discussion on the Budget as a whole. This lasts for about 4 to 5 days. Only the broad outlines of the Budget and the principles and policies underlying it are discussed at this stage.

## **Consideration of Demands by Standing Committees of Parliament**

After the first stage of General Discussion on the Union Budget is over, the House is adjourned for a fixed period. During this period, the Demands for Grants of various Ministries/ Departments are considered by Standing Committees concerned (Rule 331G). These Committees are required to make their reports to the House within specified period without asking for more time. The system of consideration of Demands for Grants by the Standing Committees was introduced from the Budget for the year 1993-94, when seventeen Departmentally Related Committees were constituted. The number of Standing Committees was raised to twenty-four in 2004. The Standing Committee consists of 31 Members, 21 from Lok Sabha and 10 from Rajya Sabha. The reports of the Standing Committees are of persuasive nature (Rule 331N). The report shall not suggest anything in the nature of cut motions.

After the reports of the Standing Committees are presented to the House, the House proceeds to the discussion and Voting on Demands for Grants, Ministry-wise. The time for discussion and Voting of Demands for Grants is allocated by the Speaker in consultation with the Leader of the House. On the last day of the allotted days, the Speaker puts all the outstanding Demands to the Vote of the House. This device is popularly known as ‘guillotine’.

Lok Sabha has the power to assent to or refuse to give assent to any Demand or even to reduce the amount of Grant sought by Government. In Rajya Sabha, there is only a General Discussion on the Budget. It does not vote on the Demands for Grants. Only so much of the amount is subject to the vote of Lok Sabha as is not a “charged” expenditure on the Consolidated Fund of India. The “charged” expenditure includes the emoluments of the President and the salaries and allowances of the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha and the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of Lok Sabha, Judges of Supreme Court, Comptroller and Auditor General of India and certain other items specified in the Constitution of India. Discussion in Lok Sabha on ‘charged’ expenditure is permissible but such expenditure is not voted by the House.

Members have full opportunity to criticise the budgetary provisions during the course of discussion as also to make suggestions for improving the financial position of the country.

## **Cut Motions**

Motions for reduction to various Demands for Grants are made in the form of Cut Motions seeking to reduce the sums sought by Government on grounds of economy or difference of opinion on matters of policy or just in order to voice a grievance.

## **Appropriation Bill**

After the General Discussion on the Budget proposals and voting on Demands for Grants have been completed, Government introduces the Appropriation Bill. The Appropriation Bill is intended to give authority to Government to incur expenditure from and out of the Consolidated Fund of India. The procedure for passing this Bill is the same as in the case of other Money Bills.

## **Finance Bill**

The Finance Bill seeking to give effect to the Government's taxation proposals which is introduced in Lok Sabha immediately after the presentation of the General Budget, is taken up for consideration and passing after the Appropriation Bill is passed. However, certain provisions in the Bill relating to levy and collection of fresh duties or variations in the existing duties come into effect immediately on the expiry of the day on which the Bill is introduced by virtue of a declaration under the Provisional Collection of Taxes Act. Parliament has to pass the Finance Bill within 75 days of its introduction.

## **Supplementary/Excess Grants**

No expenditure in excess of the sums authorized by Parliament can be incurred without the sanction of Parliament. Whenever a need arises to incur extra expenditure, a Supplementary estimate is laid before Parliament. If any money has been spent on any service during a Financial Year in excess of the amounts granted for that service and for that year, the Minister of Finance presents a Demand for Excess Grant. The procedure followed in Parliament in regard to Supplementary/Excess Grants is more or less the same as is adopted in the case of estimates included in the General Budget.

## **Budget of a State/Union territory under President's Rule**

Budget of a State under President's rule is presented to Lok Sabha. The procedure followed in regard to the Budget of the Union Government is followed in the case of State Budget also with such variations or modifications, as the Speaker may make.

LOK SABHA SECRETARIAT  
NEW DELHI  
MAY, 2019  
LARRDIS/NO.30/1/2019/PPR

## **PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEES<sup>1</sup>**

The functions of Parliament are varied in nature. The time at its disposal is limited. It cannot make very detailed scrutiny of all legislative and other matters that come up before it. A good deal of Parliamentary business is, therefore, transacted in the committees. Both Houses of Parliament have a similar committee structure and are regulated as per rules made by the two Houses under Article 118(1) of the Constitution.

Broadly, Parliamentary Committees are of two kinds—*Standing Committees* and *Ad Hoc Committees*. The former are elected or appointed every year while the latter are appointed as need arises and they cease to exist as soon as they complete the task assigned to them.

### **Standing Committees**

Among the Standing Committees, the three Financial Committees – Committees on Estimates, Public Accounts and Public Undertakings – constitute a distinct group as they keep an unremitting vigil over government expenditure and performance.

1. **Committee on Estimates** - Members of this committee are only drawn from the Lok Sabha. It comprises 30 members. It reports on what economies, improvements in organisation, efficiency or administrative reform consistent with policy underlying the estimates may be effected. It also examines whether the money is well laid out within limits of the policy implied in the estimates and suggests the form in which estimates shall be presented to the Parliament.
2. **Committee on Public Accounts** - It has 22 members (15 from Lok Sabha and 7 from Rajya Sabha). It scrutinises appropriation and finance accounts of the government and reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General. It ensures that public money is spent in accordance with the Parliament's decision and calls attention to cases of waste, extravagance, loss or nugatory expenditure.
3. **Committee on Public Undertakings** - It has 22 members (15 from Lok Sabha and 7 from Rajya Sabha). It examines reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General, if any. It

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<sup>1</sup> **Source** - Indian Yearbook 2022, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India

also examines whether public undertakings are being run efficiently and managed in accordance with sound business principles and prudent commercial practices.

Besides these three financial committees, there are 24 **Departmentally Related Standing Committees (DRSCs)**, the functions of these committees are:

- A. to consider the demands for grants of various ministries/departments of Government of India and make reports to the Houses;
- B. to examine such bills as are referred to the committee by the Chairman, Rajya Sabha or the Speaker, Lok Sabha, and make reports thereon;
- C. to consider annual reports of ministries/departments and make reports thereon;
- D. to consider policy documents presented to the Houses, if referred to the committee by the Chairman, Rajya Sabha or the Speaker, Lok Sabha, and make reports thereon.

### **Ad hoc Committees**

Such committees may be broadly classified under two heads:

1. **Committees which are constituted from time to time**, on a motion adopted by either of the two Houses to inquire into and report on specific subjects (e.g., Committee on Security in Parliament Complex, Committee on MPLADS, Committee on Railway convention, etc.);
2. **Select or Joint Committees on Bills** which are appointed to consider and report on a particular bill. These committees are distinguishable from the other ad hoc committees as much as they are concerned with bills and the procedure to be followed by them as laid down in the Rules of Procedure and Directions by the Speaker/Chairman.



## NEW PARLIAMENT BUILDING

Salient features of the New Parliament Building Project

Hon Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi laid the foundation for the New Parliament Building on 10 December 2020 at Plot No. 118, Parliament House Complex. The new building is expected to be ready by 2022, coinciding with the 75th anniversary of India's independence. The parliamentary activities and workload have increased manifold over the years. The number of seats in the House of People is also likely to go up after 2026 in the process of delimitation. This all has mounted up the requirement for a new parliament building. The building will be a four-storey structure and will replace the existing colonial structure which will complete 100 years in 2021. The new building will be 17,000 sqm larger than the present structure and will have a grand constitutional hall, multiple committee rooms, a lounge for members of parliament, a dining room, a library, and ample parking space. New Parliament House will accommodate around 64% and 57% more seats in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha respectively. Also, the new building will be able to accommodate 1224 Members of Parliament during the Joint Session within the Loksabha Chamber.



Computer-based representation of the New Parliament Building.

## IMPORTANT DATES

- April 07 - World Health Day
- April 21 - National Civil Service Day
- April 22 - World Earth Day
- April 24 - National Panchayati Day
- May 01 - International Labour Day
- May 01 - Maharashtra Day
- May 11 - National Technology Day
- May 21 - National Anti - Terrorism Day
- May 24 - National Commonwealth Day
- June 05 - World Environment Day
- June 12 - Anti - Child Labour Day
- June 20 - World Refugee Day
- June 21 - International Yoga Day
- June 22 - International Olympic Day

The national bird Peacock will be the theme of the Lok Sabha Chamber. While the Lotus will form the centerpiece of the Rajya Sabha chamber. The Central Lounge courtyard will be symbolized by the magnificent Banyan tree architecture. The new theme of the Parliament building will showcase the cultural diversity of the country. It would also incorporate regional arts and crafts. Artisans and sculptures from across the country would be employed to complete the new structure, symbolising the Atmanirbhar Bharat. The New Parliament Building will host different facilities including a desk in front of every seat in both the chambers. Also, the building will be equipped with the latest technology like PTZ cameras, a complete voice-video integrated communication system, Multimedia Unit integrated with microphone, speaker, touchscreen, request buttons and voting, simultaneous language interpretation systems, and advanced audio recording facilities.