



Rules to Admit Questions by Members of Parliament

Why in News

Recently, a question raised by a Member of Parliament was disallowed “**because of national interest**”.

- Also, over the last few sessions, **MPs have often alleged their questions have been disallowed.**

Key Points

▪ Right to Ask Questions:

- In both Houses, **elected members enjoy the right to seek information** from various ministries and departments in the form of **starred questions, unstarred questions, short notice questions and questions to private members.**
 - The **first hour of every sitting is usually devoted** to asking and answering questions in both Houses, and this is referred to as the **‘Question Hour’**.
- The **Rajya Sabha Chairman or the Lok Sabha Speaker** has the authority to decide whether a question or a part is or is not admissible under the norms of the House, and disallow any question or a part.

▪ Rules to Admit Questions:

◦ In Rajya Sabha:

- The admissibility of questions in Rajya Sabha is governed by **Rules 47-50 of the Rules of Procedure** and Conduct of Business in the Council of States.
- Among various norms, **the question** “shall be pointed, specific and confined to one issue only”.

◦ In Lok Sabha:

- In Lok Sabha, once the **notice for questions is received**, ballots determine priority.
- The questions are examined for admissibility under **Rules 41-44 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha.**
- In Lok Sabha, **questions that are not admitted include:** those that are repetitive or have been answered previously; and matters that are pending for judgment before any court of law or under consideration before a Parliamentary Committee.

▪ Categories of Questions:

◦ Starred Question:

- The member **desires an oral answer from the minister.** Such a question is distinguished by the MP with an asterisk. The answer can **also be followed by supplementary questions from members.**

◦ UnStarred Question:

- The MP seeks a written answer, which is deemed to be laid on the table of the House by the concerned minister.
- **Short Notice Question:**
 - These are on an **urgent matter of public importance**, and an oral answer is sought. For asking such a question, a notice of **less than 10 days is prescribed** as the minimum period.
- **Question to Private Member:**
 - A question can be **addressed to a private member** under Rule 40 of Lok Sabha's Rules of Procedure, or under Rule 48 of Rajya Sabha's Rules, provided that the **question deals with a subject relating to some Bill**, resolution or other matter for which that member is responsible.

Way Forward

- **Under Article 75 of the constitution**, asking questions in parliament is a constitutional right of a member of the House. Viewed from this angle, the **Question Hour in parliament stands on a different footing**.
- In a way, **every Question Hour is the manifestation of a direct kind of democracy** in operation, in the sense that representation of the people directly questions the government on matters of governance, and the government is duty bound to answer the questions in the House.
- The concerned officials also **should give a good reason on why a question should be disallowed**. The reason also cannot be accessed through **RTIs** due to **privilege of the House**—tough to take it to court as well.

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