



Sambhav

Day 10

Question 1. What is importance of the parliamentary committees in functioning of the parliament? Suggest the ways to improve its effectiveness.

Question 2. The Estimate Committee plays a major role in examining the estimates included in the budget, however, it has limited functions in this sphere. Discuss (250 Words)

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Approach / Explanation / Answer

Answer 1

Approach

- Start your answer by giving a brief about Parliamentary Committees.
- Discuss the significance of Parliamentary Committee System.
- Discuss the decline in the significance of Parliamentary committees.
- Conclude your answer by giving a Way forward.

Introduction

The Parliament is too broad a body to effectively deal with all the issues due to the voluminous nature of the work. In this complicated task, the Parliamentary Committees help discuss the various issues effectively.

Any committee is called as parliamentary committee if, it is appointed or elected by the House or nominated by the Speaker / Chairman, works on her directions and present report to the house.

Body

Significance of Parliamentary Committee System

- **Inter-Ministerial Coordination:** They are envisaged to be the face of Parliament in a set of inter-related departments and ministries. They are assigned the task of looking into the demands for grants of the ministries/departments concerned, to examine Bills pertaining to them, to consider their annual reports, and to look into their long-term plans and report to Parliament.
- **Instrument For Detailed Scrutiny:** Committee reports are usually exhaustive and provide

authentic information on matters related to governance. Bills that are referred to committees are returned to the House with significant value addition. Also, in the discharge of their mandate, they can solicit expert advice and elicit public opinion.

- **Acting As Mini-Parliament:** These Committees are smaller units of MPs from both Houses, across political parties and they function throughout the year. Also, Parliamentary committees are not bound by the populist demands that generally act as hindrance in working of parliament.
- **Members Act Freely without having any Fear:** As committee meetings are 'closed door' and members are not bound by party whips, the parliamentary committee work on the ethos of debate and discussions. Moreover, they work away from the public glare, remain informal compared to the codes that govern parliamentary proceedings, and are great training schools for new and young members of the House.

Decline in the Significance of Parliamentary committees

- **Decline in Matters Referred:** According to data by PRS Legislative Research, while 60% of the Bills in the 14th Lok Sabha and 71% in the 15th Lok Sabha were referred to DRSCs concerned, this proportion came down to 27% in the 16th Lok Sabha.
- **Neglected the Matters of Great Public Importance:** Some of the most momentous Acts of Parliament in recent years such as the overhaul of Article 370 that revoked the special status of Jammu and Kashmir and divided the State into two Union Territories were not processed by any House committee.
- **Other Shortcomings:** Other issues affecting the functioning of the committees are low attendance of MPs at meetings; too many ministries under a committee; norms not followed by most political parties while nominating MPs to committees; and the constitution of DRSCs for a year leaves very little time for specializations.

Way Forward

- **Setting Up New Committees:** Given the increasing complexity in matters of economy and technological advancement there is a need for setting up new parliamentary committees.
- **Mandatory Discussion:** Major reports of all Committees should be discussed in Parliament especially in cases where there is disagreement between a committee and the government.
- **Periodic Review:** According to the National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (NCRWC), DRSCs should be periodically reviewed so that the committees which have outlived their utility can be replaced with new ones.

Answer 2

Approach

- Start your answer by giving a brief about the Estimates committee.
- Discuss the functions of the Estimates committee.
- Discuss the limitations of the Estimates committee.
- Conclude your answer by giving a way forward.

Introduction

The first Estimates Committee in the post-independence era was constituted in 1950. Originally, it had 25 members but in 1956 its **membership was raised to 30. All the thirty members are from Lok Sabha only.** The Rajya Sabha has no representation in this committee. The function of the committee is to examine the estimates included in the budget and suggest 'economies' in public expenditure. Hence, it has been described as a '**continuous economy committee**'.

Body

Functions of the Estimate Committee

- To report what economies, improvements in organisation, efficiency and administrative reform

consistent with the policy underlying the estimates, can be affected.

- To **suggest alternative policies** in order to bring about efficiency and economy in administration.
- To examine whether the money is well laid out within the limits of the policy implied in the estimates.
- To suggest the form in which the estimates are to be presented to Parliament.

The committee shall not exercise its functions in relation to such public undertakings as are allotted to the Committee on.

Limitations of the Estimate Committee

- **No Control Over the Budget:** It examines the budget estimates only after they have been voted by the Parliament, and not before that.
- **Cannot held the Parliament Accountable:** It cannot question the policy laid down by the Parliament.
- **Advisory Jurisdiction:** Its recommendations are advisory and not binding on the ministries.
- **Takes a Longer Time:** It examines every year only certain selected ministries and departments. Thus, by rotation, it would cover all of them over a number of years.
- **Lacks the Expert Assistance of the CAG:** It lacks the expert assistance of the CAG which is available to the Public Accounts Committee.
- **Postmortem Nature of Work:** Its work is in the nature of a postmortem. It suggests a new policy or required changes in a policy when that policy has already been implemented.

Way Forward

The Estimates committee has an important role to play in the Political-administrative system of India. Hence, it should be amenable to the requisite changes to make it capable of dealing with different problems of the day effectively.

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