



Mains Practice Question

Q. "The Chairman of Rajya Sabha plays a crucial role in maintaining federal balance through their constitutional powers." Discuss. **(150 words)**

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Approach

- Introduce the answer by highlighting the constitutionality of the office of Chairman
- Delve into the Role of the Chairman in Maintaining Federal Balance
- Give Challenges in Maintaining Federal Balance
- Conclude suitably.

Introduction

Article 89 of the Constitution provides provision for the **Chairman (Vice-President of India)**, presiding over the **federal chamber of Parliament**. The Rajya Sabha's design ensures the **preservation of federalism as envisioned in the Constitution**.

- The Chairman plays a pivotal role in safeguarding state interests and maintaining the balance between the Union and the states through their constitutional powers.

Role of the Chairman in Maintaining Federal Balance

- **Legislative Oversight on State-Centric Laws:** Guides deliberations on key federal issues, such as:
 - **Article 249:** When Parliament legislates on state matters in national interest.
 - **Article 312:** Creating **All-India Services** that impact state governance.
- **Casting Vote in Contentious Decisions:** **Article 100** provides the Chairman with a casting vote in case of a tie, ensuring a fair and balanced decision.
- **Preserving the Federal Character of the Rajya Sabha:** As the custodian of the Rajya Sabha's functioning, the Chairman ensures that **debates uphold the constitutional principle of federalism**.
 - Encourages discussions on issues directly impacting states, such as GST.
- **Ensuring Neutrality and Representation:** Maintains **impartiality in debates**, ensuring equitable representation of **both smaller and larger states' interests**.
 - **Prevents the dominance of the central government's narrative** by enabling opposition and state-specific concerns to be raised effectively.
- **Platform for Addressing Grievances Against Centralization:** Provides a forum for states to voice concerns on central encroachments, e.g., **misuse of Article 356 (President's Rule)**.
 - Enables scrutiny of policies like **centrally-sponsored schemes**, ensuring states' fiscal and administrative autonomy is respected.
- **Crisis Management and Conflict Resolution:** Acts as a balancing figure during **legislative deadlocks, ensuring state perspectives are not overshadowed**.
 - Promotes consensus-building in contentious matters, fostering cooperative federalism.

Challenges in Maintaining Federal Balance:

- **Centralization of Power:** Increasing centralization of power in areas such as **taxation, law and order, and public administration** can **undermine states' autonomy**, making it difficult for the Chairman to protect the federal structure effectively.
- **Political Pressures and Dominance of the Union Government:** The Chairman, though constitutionally mandated to be impartial, often faces **political pressures, especially when a single party holds a majority**.
 - The political affiliation of the Chairman may **impact their neutrality**, particularly in sensitive matters that have **federal implications**.
- **Structural Reforms in Federal Issues:** Complex federal issues, such as **inter-state water disputes, resource-sharing, and regional disparities**, require more than procedural oversight, they demand **structural reforms that the Chairman alone cannot influence**.
- **Inadequate Representation of State Interests:** Despite the Chairman's role in ensuring balanced representation, there is still the **challenge of underrepresentation of smaller states** or those with specific regional concerns.

Conclusion

The Chairman of the Rajya Sabha holds a pivotal role in upholding India's federal balance by ensuring **impartial representation and safeguarding state interests**. While their constitutional powers allow for critical interventions, challenges like increasing centralization complicate the effective functioning of this role. To strengthen federalism, a more **coordinated approach, involving both legislative and structural reforms**, is necessary.

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