



Code of Conduct in Parliament

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Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu has asked political parties to develop a code of conduct for their members inside the legislature.

There is a code of conduct for Rajya Sabha Members since 2005 but there is no code of conduct for Lok Sabha Members.

Background

- There has been continuous disruption of parliament by members. The second half of Budget Session of 2018 witnessed complete washout. Frequent disruptions lead to adjournment of the house. The productivity of the Lok Sabha was four percent and that of the Rajya Sabha at eight percent.
- The behavior of parliamentarians is seen by the whole country and it impacts the legitimacy of the institution of parliament.

History of Code of Conducts

- There is a code of conduct in place for Judges of High Court and Supreme Court and also for State and Union Ministers.
- A code for Union ministers was adopted in 1964, and state governments adopted it as well.
- A conference of Chief Justices in 1999 resolved to adopt a code of conduct for judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts.

Code of Conduct in Rajya Sabha

- The First Report of the Ethics Committee was adopted on December 15, 1999.

- The Fourth Report was adopted by Rajya Sabha on April 20, 2005, and a 14-point Code of Conduct for members of the House was formed and was implemented. Major points included in Code of Conduct are:
 - If Members find that there is a conflict between their personal interests and the public trust which they hold, they should resolve such a conflict in a manner that their private interests are subordinated to the duty of their public office.
 - Members must not do anything that brings disrepute to the Parliament and affects their credibility.
 - Members holding public offices should use public resources in such a manner as may lead to public good.
 - Members should always see that their private financial interests and those of the members of their immediate family do not come in conflict with the public interest and if any such conflict ever arises, they should try to resolve such a conflict in a manner that the public interest is not jeopardized.
 - Members should never expect or accept any fee, remuneration or benefit for a vote given or not given by them on the floor of the House, for introducing a Bill, for moving a resolution or desisting from moving a resolution, putting a question or abstaining from asking a question or participating in the deliberations of the House or a Parliamentary Committee.

Code of Conduct in Lok Sabha

- The first Ethics Committee in Lok Sabha was constituted on May 16, 2000.
- The Report of the Ethics Committee — with regard to amendments to the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha was laid on the table of the House on December 18, 2014. Its recommendations were included in the report of the Rules Committee of Lok Sabha tabled in Lok Sabha on August 5, 2015.
- It said that the Ethics Committee will formulate a Code of Conduct for Members and suggest amendments or additions to the Code of Conduct from time to time. The matter has since been pending with the Ethics Committee.

International Examples

- The Canadian House of Commons has a Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner with powers to examine violations of the Conflict of Interest Code at the request of another Member or by Resolution of the House or on his own initiative.
- Germany has had a Code of Conduct for members of the Bundestag since 1972.
- The USA has a Code of Conduct in place since 1968.

Way Forward

- Disruption of Parliament is a serious issue and it is necessary to put in place some mechanism to check unruly Members of Parliament.
- It should also be ensured that the Code of Ethics should not become a tool to curb the role of Opposition. Like in the UK, Some working days of Parliament should be allotted to Opposition to decide the Agenda of the day.