



Lok Sabha's Ethics Committee

For Prelims: [Lok Sabha's Ethics Committee](#), ['Cash for Query'](#), [Privileges Committee](#), Moral and Ethical conduct of members of Parliament.

For Mains: Lok Sabha's Ethics Committee, Parliament and State Legislatures, structure functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.

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Why in News?

Recently, [Lok Sabha's Ethics Committee](#) has initiated investigation over ['Cash for Query'](#) allegations on a Member of Parliament (MPs) accused of accepting "**Bribes**" to ask questions in Parliament.

- The committee will conduct proceedings to investigate the allegations and gather evidence from all relevant parties, including the complainant, witnesses, and the accused MP.

What are the Potential Outcomes?

- If the Ethics Committee finds merit in the complaint, it can make recommendations. The potential punishment it can recommend typically involves [Suspension of the MP for a specified period](#).
- The House, which includes all MPs, will ultimately decide whether to accept the committee's recommendation and determine the nature and extent of the punishment, if any.
- If the accused were to be expelled or face a potentially adverse decision, she could **challenge it in a court of law**.
 - The grounds for challenging such a decision in court are limited and **typically include claims of unconstitutionality**, gross illegality, or a denial of natural justice.

Note

In 2005, the two Houses adopted motions to expel 10 Lok Sabha MPs and one Rajya Sabha MP who were accused of agreeing to ask questions in Parliament for money. The motion in Lok Sabha was based on the **Bansal Committee's report**, a **special committee** set up by the Speaker to examine the issue.

- In Rajya Sabha, the complaint was examined by the House Ethics Committee.
- The expelled MPs, demanded that the **Bansal Committee's report** be sent to the Privileges Committee, so that the parliamentarians **could defend themselves**.

What is Lok Sabha's Ethics Committee?

- **About:**

- The members of the Ethics Committee are appointed by the **Speaker for a period of one year.**
- The **15-member** Committee's function is to examine every complaint relating to unethical conduct of a Member of Lok Sabha referred to it by the Speaker and make such recommendations as it may deem fit.
- **History:**
 - A Presiding **Officers' Conference held in Delhi in 1996** first mooted the **idea of ethics panels** for the two Houses (Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha)
 - Then Vice President (and Rajya Sabha Chairman) K R Narayanan constituted the **Ethics Committee of the Upper House** on 4th March, 1997 to oversee the **Moral and Ethical conduct of members** and examine cases of misconduct referred to it.
 - In the case of Lok Sabha, a study group of the house committee of **privileges in 1997** recommended the constitution of an **Ethics committee, but it could not be taken up by Lok Sabha.**
 - The Committee of Privileges **finally recommended the constitution of an Ethics Committee** during the **13th Lok Sabha.**
 - The late Speaker, G M C Balayogi, constituted an **ad hoc Ethics Committee** in 2000, which became a permanent part of the House only in 2015.
- **Procedure for Complaints:**
 - Any person can **complain against a Member** through another Lok Sabha MP, along with **evidence of the alleged misconduct**, and an affidavit stating that the complaint is not **"false, frivolous, or vexatious"**.
 - If the Member himself complains, the affidavit is not needed.
 - The Speaker can refer to the Committee **any complaint against an MP.**
 - The Committee does not entertain complaints based only on media reports or on matters that are sub judice. The Committee makes a **Prima Facie inquiry before deciding to examine** a complaint. It makes its recommendations after evaluating the complaint.
 - The Committee presents its report to the Speaker, who asks the House if the report should be taken up for consideration.
 - There is also a **provision for a half-hour discussion** on the report.
- **Overlap with Privileges Committee:**
 - The work of the Ethics Committee and the **Privileges Committee** often overlap. An allegation of corruption against an MP can be sent to either body, but usually more serious **accusations go to the Privileges Committee.**
 - The mandate of the Privileges Committee is to **safeguard the "freedom, authority, and dignity of Parliament".**
 - These privileges are enjoyed by individual Members as well as the House as a whole. An MP can be examined for **Breach of Privilege**; a non-MP too can be accused of breach of privilege for actions that attack the authority and dignity of the House.
 - The Ethics Committee can take up only cases of misconduct that involve MPs.