British Queen's Speech before Brexit

What is the issue?

- British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is calling a Queen's Speech for October 14, a move his opponents say is an attempt to limit the opposition to Brexit weeks before the country is due to leave the European Union.
- Johnson rejected the criticism as completely untrue, saying the Queen's Speech would give him the chance to set out his domestic programme while allowing ample time for discussion of Brexit in parliament.

What is a Queen's speech?

- It is used by the government to layout plans for the coming year.
- It lists the main priorities and legislation the government aims to pass. Queen Elizabeth reads the speech, written by the government.
- It is the highlight of the day of the state opening of parliament, which marks the beginning of a new parliamentary session.

Is Johnson doing anything unusual?

- On the surface, it's a no. Typically, a Queen's Speech is held every year.
- Johnson is a new prime minister, who replaced Theresa May in July 2019 and so he is expected to have his own legislative priorities.
- Because of the volume of legislation that was anticipated ahead of Brexit, the current parliamentary session has lasted more than 2 years.
- The last Queen's Speech was in 2017. The government says a new programme is overdue.
- Parliament is normally suspended for a few days ahead of a Queen's Speech. In recent years, this suspension has lasted for 5 to 20 days.

Why are some people so angry about it?

- It is because of the timing. Britain is about to make its most strategic decision in decades over how and even whether, it leaves the EU.
- The decision to hold the Queen's Speech on October 14 shaves several days off an already small number of parliamentary sittings before the Brexit deadline (October 31).
- Johnson says he wants to leave the EU with an exit deal to smooth the transition, but if he can't get one, he'll leave anyway.

- A narrow majority of lawmakers have shown they do not want a no-deal exit and are hoping to use parliamentary procedures to stop Johnson and force him to request extra time from the EU.

What happens next?

- Parliament will sit for at least a week returning from summer break on September 3, 2019. The government said that it'll begin procedures to start the suspension on September 9.
- The last sitting day before the Queen's Speech is expected to be shortly after that but has not yet been confirmed.
- This gives those opposed to a no-deal Brexit just a few days to get their plans in motion.
- On October 14, the Queen will formally re-open parliament and deliver the speech.
- This will be followed by a debate lasting several days on the contents of the speech and culminating in votes on October 21 and October 22.
- Winning these votes will be a crucial test of Johnson's ability to govern.
- However, if he loses and his government is subsequently toppled by a vote of no confidence, he would have scope to delay his resignation and a new election until after Oct. 31.
- Between the speech being delivered and the votes upon it, Johnson will travel to Brussels in search of a last-minute, renegotiated exit deal. The summit takes place on Oct. 17-18.

Source: The Indian Express

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