

## Finance Bill Passed Without Discussion

### What is the issue?

\n\n

\n

- The Guillotine provision was deployed, to pass all outstanding Demands for Grants in the Budget without "discussion".

\n

- This has raised questions on the roles and responsibilities of the legislature in a democracy.

\n

\n\n

### What is the Guillotine provision?

\n\n

\n

- In legislative parlance, to “guillotine” means to put together and fast-track the passage of financial business.

\n

- After the Budget is presented, Parliament goes into recess for about 3 weeks.

\n

- During this time, the House Standing Committees examine Demands for Grants for various Ministries, and prepare reports.

\n

- After Parliament reassembles, the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) draws up a schedule for discussions on the Demands for Grants.

\n

- Given the limited time, the House cannot take up the expenditure demands of all Ministries.

\n

- The BAC therefore identifies some important Ministries for discussions.

\n

- These may include Ministries of Home, Defence, External Affairs, Agriculture, Rural Development and Human Resource Development.

\n

- This is when Members discuss the policies and working of Ministries.

\n

- Once the House is done with these debates, the Speaker applies the

“guillotine”.

\n

- This is to put to vote at once, all the other outstanding demands for grants that have not been discussed.

\n

- This usually happens on the last day earmarked for the discussion on the Budget.

\n

- The purpose is to ensure timely passage of the Finance Bill, marking the completion of the legislative exercise with regard to the Budget.

\n

\n\n

### **How were the Bills passed at present?**

\n\n

\n

- Owing to the disruption in Parliament due to various issues, all Demands for Grants were “guillotined”.

\n

- The Finance Bill and Appropriation Bill (contained the consolidated Demands for Grants) with a spending plan of Rs 89.25 lakh crore.

\n

- The Appropriation Bill details plans on how government ministries and departments would spend their money this fiscal.

\n

- This, along with 21 amendments to the Finance Bill, which contains taxation proposals for 2018-19, was introduced.

\n

- These were voted on, and passed by voice vote, all within 30 minutes.

\n

- Procedurally, the government cannot be questioned as it is at the Speaker’s discretion to deploy the Guillotine provision.

\n

\n\n

### **What are the concerns?**

\n\n

\n

- It was an unusual step because there were still 3 weeks left in the Budget Session.

\n

- There is enough time for the Bills to have undergone "discussions" in the

House.

\n

- The government is technically right to fast-track legislative business but it seems to have silenced the voice of democracy and unfairly bypassed the convention.
- The clear majority of the ruling coalition in the Lower House guaranteed that the Bills would pass, without discussion.
- But beyond legislative majorities, democracy also functioned through debate, dissent, and accountability.
- One of the basic checks on the power of the executive in a democracy comes from the legislature's oversight over funds.
- The refusal to discuss the Finance Bill is symptomatic of the steady decline in the prestige and position of Parliament.
- It is also a stain in the ideas that the Parliament embodies.
- Notably, this Budget Session has spent the least time "discussing" the Finance Bill since 2004.
- The government is registering the largest year-on-year decline in time spent on the Finance Bill.

\n

\n\n

## **What is the way forward?**

\n\n

\n

- The responsibility for the healthy functioning of Parliament is something that must be shared by every party.
- The government, despite its electoral dominance and even because of it, must ensure that it encourages debate rather than circumvent it.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

**Source: Indian Express**

\n



**SHANKAR**  
**IAS PARLIAMENT**  
*Information is Empowering*