

## **Rajya Sabha - 'Rules of Procedure' Reforms**

### **What is the issue?**

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- Vice President (and RS Chairman) Mr. Venkaiah Naidu appointed a two-member committee for suggesting reforms to the rules of the Upper House.

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- V.K. Agnihotri, former secretary general of RS, is heading the committee.

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### **What is the salience of Rules of Procedure?**

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- Both Houses of Parliament have their own rules of procedure and these rules govern every detail of how the Houses function on a daily basis.

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- They determine MPs' participation in parliamentary proceedings while making laws, passing budgets, questioning the government and representing us.

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- In the seven decades since independence, governance has become complicated and the subjects of laws are more technical.

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- But the rules governing the functioning of the Rajya Sabha have not kept pace with the times, thereby proving to be a retardant.

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- There was hence a need for reforming them and the Agnihotri committee has been constituted with a mandate to submit its report within 3 months.

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### **How did the current Rules of Procedure of Rajya Sabha evolve?**

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- When Rajya Shaba commenced for the 1<sup>st</sup> time in early 1952, it didn't have rules of its own and rather relied on the constitutional assembly.  
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- Subsequently, a committee of 15 MPs were constituted from within the Rajya Shaba to evolve its own rules of procedure, which was finalised in late 1952.  
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- But only in 1964, Rajya Sabha got its rules codified into Article 118(1) of the constitution - which continues till now with minor alterations.  
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- Periodic reviews have been carried out and the last such review for the Rajya Sabha happened in 2009.  
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### What are the critical issues facing Agnihotri Committee?

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- The Agnihotri committee has to address four fundamental issues that are currently plaguing our parliamentary system.  
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- **Firstly** - It seems that the two Houses of Parliament meet mostly for transacting government business (stifling of the opposition voices).  
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- The committee will have to balance completion of government business with discussions raised by other political parties.  
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- **Secondly** - The existing mechanisms (like Question Hour) for securing the government's accountability to Parliament have lost their edge.  
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- Measures for completely overhauling these mechanisms are required.  
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- **Thirdly** - As issues facing Parliament are now more complex and technical, strengthening the deliberative prowess of the houses is needed.  
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- **Finally** - Disruptions in parliament has become increasingly regular.  
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- Hence, suggesting solutions for protecting the sanctity of parliamentary proceedings is needed.  
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**Source: Indian Express**

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