Row over Unparliamentary Language

What is the issue?

A major row erupted recently over a compilation of words deemed unfit for use in Parliament, released by the Lok Sabha secretariat.

What is the list about?

- There are phrases and words, both in English and in Indian languages that are considered "unparliamentary".
- The **Presiding Officers** have the job of keeping such words out of Parliament's records.
- The list has words and phrases disallowed not only in the Indian Parliament, but also in various state assemblies, as well as some parliaments of other countries.
- It comprises words that have been expunged from the records in both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha over the last few years.
- The list includes words such as dodgy, betrayal, dog, frighten, hack, hypocrisy, irresponsible, liar, murder and shame.
- It also includes commonplace words such as penguin, goose, fudge, 'grubby', 'saleswoman', 'species' and 'yapping'.
- It's a routine practice continuing since 1959.
- After 2018, the list has been uploaded on the Lok Sabha intranet and the MPs portal.

Do MPs have the freedom to say whatever they want inside the House?

- **Article 105(2)** of the Constitution lays down that no Member of Parliament shall be liable to any proceedings in any court in respect of anything said or any vote given by him in Parliament or any committee thereof.
- However, it is subject to the discipline of the Rules of Parliament, the good sense of Members and the control of proceedings by the Speaker.
- Rule 380 (Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha) - "If the Speaker is of opinion that words in debate are defamatory or indecent or unparliamentary or undignified, the Speaker may exercise discretion order and expunge such words from the proceedings of the House."

Expunction is the act or process of expunging something—erasing, deleting, crossing out, or destroying it.

What is the response to the list?

- **Support for the list**- Government sources said that the list was just a compilation of expunged words.

- Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla clarified that no words or phrases have been banned in Parliament and that the members have absolute freedom to express their views.
- He said that the decision to expunge is taken only with the instruction of the Speaker or the Chairman and the government has no role in it.
- **Opposition's criticism-** A mere compilation of the words classified as unparliamentary will not deter an MP from using them and act as a ready reference for using such words on the floor of the House.
- Opposition parties see this as an attempt to restrict their vocabulary.

References

1. https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/word-cant-get-out/article65642389.ece
2. https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-what-qualifies-as-unparliamentary-know-the-words-mps-cannot-use-in-the-house-8029082/

