

Zero Hour - Indian Polity

Zero Hour is the time when Members of Parliament (MPs) can raise Issues of Urgent Public Importance. For raising matters during the Zero Hour, MPs must give the notice before 10 am to the Speaker/ Chairman on the day of the sitting. The notice must state the subject they wish to raise in the House. However, Speaker, Lok Sabha / Chairman, Rajya Sabha may allow or decline a Member to raise a matter of importance.

‘Zero Hour’ is not mentioned in the **Rules of Procedure**. Thus, it is an **informal device** available to MPs to raise matters without any notice 10 days in advance. This is because, generally, the matters are of public importance and such matters cannot wait for 10 days.

Why is it called ‘Zero Hour’?

While the dictionary meaning of ‘Zero Hour’ is “the critical moment” or “the moment of decision”, in parliamentary parlance, it is the time gap between the end of Question Hour and the beginning of the regular business. The other rationale behind naming it so can be attributed to the fact that it starts at 12 noon.

When was Zero Hour introduced in Parliamentary Affairs in India?

- Zero Hour is an Indian innovation in the field of parliamentary procedures and has been in existence since 1962.
- During the sixties, members of parliament used to raise many pressing issues of national and global import after Question Hour.
- On such an occasion, a member raised an issue about announcements of policy made by ministers outside the parliament when parliament was in session.
- This act caused an idea among other members who called for another provision for discussing important matters in the House.
- Rabi Ray, the ninth Speaker of the Lok Sabha introduced certain changes in the proceedings of the House to create more opportunities for the members to raise matters of urgent public importance.
- He proposed a mechanism to regulate the proceedings during the ‘Zero Hour’, raise matters in a more orderly manner and optimize the time of the House.
- For the Rajya Sabha, the day starts with the Zero Hour and not the Question Hour as it is for the Lok Sabha.

UPSC Questions related to Zero Hour

What is the time of Zero Hour?

The Zero Hour starts at 12 noon immediately following the Question Hour.

What is the duration of Zero Hour in the Lok Sabha?

30 minutes. A member gets three minutes to raise an issue in the Zero Hour.

Who introduced zero hour?

The Zero Hour is an Indian innovation in parliamentary proceedings. The ninth Speaker Rabi Ray regulated this practice.

What is the difference between question hour and zero hour?

Question Hour is the first hour of the Lok Sabha session wherein members question the government. Zero Hour immediately followed the Question Hour.

