

## Guillotine Procedure [UPSC Notes]

**Context:** The ongoing deadlock in the Indian Parliament has led to discussions among MPs that the government may use the "guillotine" to pass the Finance Bill without any discussion in the Lok Sabha.

In this article, you can read about guillotine procedure which is an important topic relevant for the [IAS exam](#).

### What is a Guillotine?

- The guillotine is a device specifically designed for carrying out beheading executions. It comprises a large, weighted blade that is raised to the top of a tall, upright frame and then released to fall on the neck of a condemned person who is secured at the bottom of the frame, resulting in a single, clean pass execution.
- The guillotine is famously associated with the French Revolution, where it became popular among revolutionaries who used it for capital punishment against supporters of the Ancien Regime, including King Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette. The device remained in use in France until the country abolished capital punishment in 1981.
- In legislative terminology, "guillotine" refers to a procedural exercise in the Lok Sabha during the Budget Session that involves bunching together and fast-tracking the passage of financial business.

### The guillotine Procedure:

- The guillotine procedure begins after the Budget is presented, during which Parliament goes into recess for about three weeks.
- During this time, House Standing Committees examine Demands for Grants for various Ministries and prepare reports.
- Once Parliament reassembles, the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) schedules discussions on the Demands for Grants, given the limitation of time.
- The House cannot take up the expenditure demands of all Ministries; thus, the BAC identifies important Ministries for discussions, usually listing Demands for Grants of the Ministries of Home, Defence, External Affairs, Agriculture, Rural Development, and Human Resource Development.
- Members utilize the opportunity to discuss the policies and workings of these Ministries. Once debates during the Budget session are over, the Speaker applies the "guillotine," and all outstanding demands for grants are put to vote simultaneously.

- This usually happens on the last day allocated for the Budget discussion, aiming to ensure the timely passage of the Finance Bill, marking the completion of the legislative exercise concerning the Budget.

**Impact on parliamentary democracy:**

- The guillotine process in legislative parlance has a significant impact on parliamentary democracy.
- On one hand, it enables the smooth functioning of the Parliament by ensuring timely passage of important financial business. This is particularly important during the Budget Session, as the timely passage of the Finance Bill is crucial for the government to carry out its financial operations and schemes.
- However, on the other hand, it can also be seen as a limitation on democratic deliberation and debate. The guillotine process essentially curtails the time available for members to discuss and debate the Demands for Grants, which are essentially budgetary allocations for various ministries. This can limit the opportunity for members to scrutinize the government's policies and working, and to raise important issues and concerns.
- Moreover, if the guillotine is used to pass the Finance Bill without any discussion or debate, it can be seen as a negation of the basic principles of parliamentary democracy.
- The Budget Session is an important opportunity for members to hold the government accountable, and to ensure that the budgetary allocations are in line with the needs and priorities of the country.
- By using the guillotine to fast-track the passage of financial business, the government can be seen as undermining the role of the Parliament as a forum for democratic deliberation and debate.

**Conclusion:**

- Therefore, while the guillotine process can be useful in ensuring the smooth functioning of the Parliament, it should be used judiciously and in a manner that does not compromise the principles of democratic deliberation and debate.