

Materials for SNC students

Dr. Paromita Chakraborty, Department of Political Science, Surendranath College

Estimates Committee

The Committee on Estimates, constituted for the first time in 1950, is a Parliamentary Committee consisting of 30 members, elected every year by the Lok Sabha from amongst its Members. Members are elected every year from amongst Lok Sabha members according to the principle of proportional representation by means of a single transferable vote. Thus all parties get due representation in the committee. The Chairperson of the Committee is appointed by the Speaker from amongst its members. The term of office of the Committee is one year. No minister can be a member of the estimates committee. The Chairman of the Estimates committee is appointed by Speaker of the Lok Sabha from amongst its members.

The functions of the Estimates Committee are:

- to report what economies, improvements in organisation, efficiency or administrative reform, consistent with the policy underlying the estimates may be effected;
- to suggest alternative policies in order to bring about efficiency and economy in administration;
- to examine whether the money is well laid out within the limits of the policy implied in the estimates; and
- to suggest the form in which the estimates shall be presented to Parliament.
- The committee examines the estimates included in the budget.
- Examining the appropriation account and the finance accounts of the Union Government and any other accounts laid before the Lok Sabha.
- Examines accounts of autonomous and semi-autonomous, the audit of which is conducted by the CAG.
- Examines money spent on services during a financial year in excess of the amount granted by the Lok Sabha.

The committee also examines problems of special interest that arise during its work or are explicitly submitted to it by the house or the speaker. The committee can also seek preparatory materials from relevant entities in relation to the subjects under consideration, as well as opinions from non-officials with the understanding of the subjects for use by committee members.

Estimates Committee – Limitations

- The power to examine the budget estimates is not an absolute one. The committee can only examine the budget after it is voted upon and not before that.
- Nowhere the power to question the policies of the Parliament has been conferred upon the committee.
- All the recommendations made by the committee are advisory in nature and stand non-binding for the parliament.

Conclusion

Estimates committee being one of the most important finance committees, it should be armed with more responsibilities. By scrutinizing the expenditure of the government that has been proposed in the budget, the estimates committee can keep a better watch on the public purse and make the government more accountable and more transparent towards people's money.