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Q4

To what extent, in your view, the Parliament is able to ensure accountability of the executive in India?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2021 · GS II · 10 marks · Parliament and State Legislatures

Parliament and State legislatures - structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers and privileges and issues arising out of these.

Core demand of the question

- To what extent, in your view, the Parliament is able to ensure accountability of the executive in India?
- Honour the official stem. Weigh formal tools (including CAG and PAC) against practice
- Keep the explanation within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

Collective responsibility, questions, money votes, CAG audit and the PAC are the core accountability tools.

PAC, usually Opposition-chaired, is the sharpest regular fiscal check on the executive.

Disruptions, the Tenth Schedule whip, ordinances and thin committee reference reduce daily control.

Parliament can still unseat a government and expose waste; it is not a rubber stamp, and it is not a full-time scrutineer either.

Protecting Question Hour and default committee scrutiny would widen the extent without rewriting the Constitution.

Introduction

- **Parliamentary accountability of the executive is written into the Constitution:** collective responsibility, questions, money votes, and audit. In practice the tools still work, but disruptions, a tight whip, and ordinance politics have narrowed the extent to which the House actually holds the government to account.

Body

Formal tools that still bite

- **Article 75** makes the Council of Ministers collectively responsible to the Lok Sabha; a confidence vote remains the ultimate sanction.
- Question Hour, Zero Hour, calling attention, and adjournment motions force ministers onto the record; departmental standing committees examine Demands for Grants and bills when the House itself is short of time.
- The Comptroller and Auditor General under **Article 148** audits Union accounts; the **Public Accounts Committee**, traditionally chaired by an Opposition member, examines CAG reports and can summon officials, which is the hardest regular fiscal check.

- The **Estimates Committee** and the Committee on Public Undertakings complete the financial triad; budget cut motions and the need for appropriation still legally bind the executive.

Where the extent falls short

- Frequent adjournments and walkouts shrink Question Hour, which is the daily accountability device the citizen actually sees.
- The anti-defection **Tenth Schedule** whip reduces intra-party dissent, so the House often debates as two blocs rather than as a scrutineer of departments.
- Ordinances under **Article 123**, delayed laying of reports, and a packed legislative calendar mean many statutes pass with thin clause-by-clause debate.
- Money bills and hybrid finance bills have been used in ways that limit Rajya Sabha's role, which weakens bicameral check even when the Lok Sabha majority is firm.

A balanced extent

- Parliament can still unseat a government, stall a bill, and shame a ministry through PAC and CAG; that is more than a rubber stamp.
- **Recommendation:** protect Question Hour in the rule book, time-bind PAC action-taken reports, and refer more bills to committees as the default, not as a favour.

Flow diagram

Executive -> Lok Sabha confidence Art 75
 Executive -> Question Hour and debates
 CAG Art 148 Art 148 -> Public Accounts Committee
 Public Accounts Committee -> Executive
 Question Hour and debates -> Executive
 Lok Sabha confidence Art 75 -> Executive

Conclusion

- **Parliament is able to ensure executive accountability to a real but incomplete extent:** CAG and PAC, confidence votes, and the budget still constrain the government, while disruptions, the whip, and ordinance practice blunt daily control. The design is strong; the working year of the House decides how much of that design the citizen gets.

Facts & figures

Article 75

Collective responsibility of the Council of Ministers to the Lok Sabha.

Article 148 / CAG

Independent audit of Union accounts that feeds parliamentary control.

Public Accounts Committee

Financial committee that examines CAG reports; convention of an Opposition chair.

Article 123

Ordinance power of the President that can sidestep sitting legislative scrutiny if overused.

Tenth Schedule

Anti-defection rules that strengthen the whip and weaken individual scrutiny inside the ruling party.

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