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## MENU

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## Topics Covered



- Summary:
- What is the news?
  - Understanding Zero Hour
    - Definition and Significance
    - Structure of Legislative Sessions
    - Rationale Behind the Introduction
    - Features of Zero Hour in the Indian Parliament
    - Importance of Zero Hour
  - Himachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly: A Snapshot
    - Future Implications
    - How Zero Hour differ from Question Hour?
  - Question Hour
  - Zero Hour
  - Conclusion
    - QuizTime:
    - Are you Ready!
- Read the Below Instructions Carefully:
  - Please Rate!
- Mains Questions:
  - Question 1:
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  - Relevance to the Himachal HPAS UPSC Prelims and Mains syllabus under the following

topics:

- Himachal HPAS Prelims:
- Himachal HPAS Mains:

## **Summary:**

- **Introduction of Zero Hour:** On September 4, 2024, the Himachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly introduced Zero Hour, allowing members to raise urgent public issues immediately after Question Hour.
- **Purpose and Structure:** Zero Hour aims to minimize disruptions during Question Hour and enhance legislative accountability<sup>23</sup>. It starts at 12:30 PM, following the Question Hour, and lasts for 30 minutes.
- **Significance:** This practice empowers assembly members to address pressing concerns, improving public discourse and ensuring government responsiveness.
- **Comparison with Question Hour:** Unlike the structured Question Hour, Zero Hour is informal and flexible, allowing spontaneous discussions on urgent matters.

## ***What is the news?***

- On September 4, 2024, the Himachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly marked a significant milestone by introducing the concept of Zero Hour in its legislative proceedings. This decision reflects a broader trend within Indian democracy, where states are increasingly adopting practices that enhance legislative accountability and public engagement.
- Zero Hour, although not mentioned in formal parliamentary rules, provides a platform for assembly members to raise urgent public issues, ensuring that important matters are addressed promptly.

## *Understanding Zero Hour*

### *Definition and Significance*

- Zero Hour refers to the period that follows the Question Hour during legislative sessions. It allows members of the assembly to raise urgent matters of public importance without disrupting the scheduled questioning of government officials. Traditionally, this practice originated in the Indian Parliament during the 1960s and has since been emulated by various state legislative assemblies, including Himachal Pradesh.

# ***Structure of Legislative Sessions***

- In the Himachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly, the Question Hour is scheduled from 11:30 AM to 12:30 PM. Following this, Zero Hour commences at 12:30 PM and lasts for half an hour. During this time, members can raise issues relevant to their constituencies, with each member allotted approximately one minute to present their concerns.

## ***Rationale Behind the Introduction***

### ***Addressing Legislative Disruptions***

- The introduction of Zero Hour aims to minimize disruptions that often occur during the Question Hour. Opposition members frequently attempt to voice urgent issues, which can derail the questioning process intended to hold the government accountable. By establishing Zero Hour, the assembly provides a structured time for such discussions, allowing for a more orderly legislative process.

### ***Enhancing Accountability and Transparency***

- The Zero Hour serves as a vital tool for enhancing the accountability of the government. It empowers



assembly members to address pressing concerns, thereby improving public discourse and ensuring that the government remains responsive to the needs of its constituents. This move is especially important in a democratic setup where representation and accountability are fundamental principles.

## ***Features of Zero Hour in the Indian Parliament***

In the Indian Parliament, Zero Hour takes place between the conclusion of Question Hour and the beginning of scheduled business. Although there are no formal rules governing Zero Hour, the Speaker in the Lok Sabha and the Chairman in the Rajya Sabha can permit members to raise issues of urgent public importance. The duration of Zero Hour varies based on the issues raised and the discretion of the Speaker or Chairman.

- **Time Allocation:** Members are typically given a limited amount of time, usually one minute or slightly more, to raise their concerns.
- **Subject Matter:** Issues raised during Zero Hour should be of urgent public importance and should not be repetitive or irrelevant.
- **Speaker's Discretion:** The Speaker of the Assembly has the authority to allow or disallow questions raised during Zero Hour, ensuring that the proceedings remain orderly and focused.

## ***Importance of Zero Hour***

- **Member Engagement:** It provides an opportunity for members to actively participate in discussions on urgent matters.
- **Public Accountability:** Enables representatives to hold the government accountable for its actions and decisions.
- **Legislative Efficiency:** Helps streamline legislative proceedings by categorizing time for urgent discussions separate from scheduled agenda items.

## ***Himachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly: A Snapshot***

- The Himachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly, currently in its 14th session, was constituted in December 2022 and consists of 68 members. The assembly plays a crucial role in governance and policy-making within the state. With Kuldeep Singh Pathania as the Speaker, the introduction of Zero Hour represents a progressive step towards fostering a more responsive and accountable legislative environment.

## ***Future Implications***

- The adoption of Zero Hour in the Himachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly could set a precedent for enhancing legislative practices in other states. As assemblies seek to become more engaging and responsive to public needs, Zero Hour may emerge as a standard feature, promoting effective governance and citizen participation.

## ***How Zero Hour differ from Question Hour?***

- Zero Hour and Question Hour are two distinct periods in the proceedings of legislative assemblies in India, including both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha at the national level, as well as in various state assemblies. Here's a detailed comparison of the two:

### ***Question Hour***

#### ***Timing:***

- Question Hour is usually the first hour of a legislative session, during which members can ask questions to the government.
- In the Lok Sabha, it typically takes place from 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM, while in the Rajya Sabha, it is held from 12:00 PM to 1:00 PM.

## ***Purpose:***

- The primary aim of Question Hour is to hold the government accountable for its actions and policies.
- Members can seek information, clarification, and accountability on various issues related to governance and administration.

## ***Types of Questions:***

*Questions can be classified into three categories:*

- **Starred Questions:** These require an oral answer, allowing for supplementary questions.
- **Unstarred Questions:** These require a written answer and cannot be followed by supplementary questions.
- **Short Notice Questions:** These can be asked with less prior notice, usually on urgent matters.

## ***Disruption:***

- Question Hour is critical for legislative accountability. If members raise issues unrelated to the questions, it may disrupt the proceedings.

## ***Zero Hour***

### ***Timing:***

- Zero Hour occurs immediately after Question Hour, typically beginning at 12:30 PM in the Lok Sabha (though this may vary) and lasts for about 30 minutes.
- It is an informal practice and not explicitly mentioned in the rules of procedure.

### ***Purpose:***

- Zero Hour allows members to raise issues of urgent public importance that may not be covered in the Question Hour.
- It serves as a platform for discussions on matters that need immediate attention from the government.

### ***Types of Issues Raised:***

- Members can raise any matter they consider important, such as local issues, national concerns, or emergencies affecting the public.
- Each member is generally allowed a minute or slightly more to speak on their issue.

### ***Flexibility:***

- The duration of Zero Hour is flexible and can be adjusted depending on the number of matters raised by the members. The Speaker or Chairman has the authority to manage this time.

## ***No Formality:***

- Unlike Question Hour, there is no formal structure for Zero Hour, and it is governed by the discretion of the Speaker.

## ***Summary of Differences***

### *Aspect Question Hour Zero Hour*

- Timing Fixed, first hour of the session  
Immediately after Question Hour, flexible duration
- Purpose To hold the government accountable To raise urgent public issues
- Types of Issues Questions related to governance, policies Any urgent matter of public importance
- Disruption Can be disrupted by unrelated issues  
More informal, allows for spontaneous discussions
- Formal Structure Structured, follows specific rules  
Unstructured, governed by Speaker's discretion

## ***Conclusion***

- The introduction of Zero Hour in Himachal Pradesh is a commendable step towards improving legislative accountability and enhancing the democratic process. By providing a structured time for urgent discussions, the assembly not only empowers its members but also reinforces its

commitment to addressing the pressing concerns of the citizens. This initiative underscores the need for continuous evolution in legislative practices to meet the demands of a dynamic society.



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  - Attempt all questions (You can attempt or leave)
  - After Attempting Last Question.
  - Enter Name & Email
  - Click on - Check Result
  - Scroll down - Check out Solutions too.
- Thank you.

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Category: Himachal General Knowledge

***How does the concept of Zero Hour contribute to the legislative process in India?***

- It formalizes the duration of debates on bills.
- It restricts the topics that can be discussed in the assembly.
- It enhances accountability by providing a forum for urgent issues to be raised.
- It serves as a time for social gatherings among members.

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Category: Himachal General Knowledge



## ***What is Zero Hour in the context of legislative assemblies in India?***

- A time period allocated for formal discussions on bills.
- A session where members can raise matters of urgent public importance after Question Hour.
- A period dedicated to reviewing government policies.
- A break time for members of the assembly.

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Category: Himachal General Knowledge

## ***Which of the following statements about Zero Hour in the Himachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly is correct?***

- It is mentioned explicitly in the rules of the assembly.
- It allows members to speak for unlimited time on issues of their choice.
- It was introduced to prevent disruptions during the Question Hour.
- It is limited to only government members raising issues.

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Category: Himachal General Knowledge

## ***What was the primary reason for introducing Zero Hour in the Himachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly?***

- To facilitate long debates on government policies.
- To enable members to discuss urgent public issues without disrupting Question Hour.
- To allocate more time for the opposition to raise concerns.

To ensure all questions are answered in detail.

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Category: Himachal General Knowledge

**Which of the following best describes the nature of Zero Hour in Indian legislative assemblies?**

- A formal rule established by constitutional provisions.
- A flexible time period determined by the Speaker or Chairman for urgent discussions.
- A mandatory session that must occur every day.
- A fixed duration of one hour allocated for discussing bills.

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Finish

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# Mains Questions:



## **Question 1:**

***Discuss the significance of introducing Zero Hour in the Himachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly. How does it contribute to the legislative process and enhance accountability?(250 words)***

## **Model Answer:**

The introduction of Zero Hour in the Himachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly is a significant step toward strengthening legislative practices and enhancing accountability in governance.

- **Definition and Context:** Zero Hour refers to the time allocated after the Question Hour for members of the assembly to raise urgent matters of public importance. While the concept originated in the

Indian Parliament during the 1960s, its adoption in state assemblies represents a move towards more responsive governance.

- **Enhancing Legislative Accountability:** The primary significance of Zero Hour lies in its ability to provide a structured platform for members to address pressing issues affecting their constituencies. By allowing members to present urgent matters immediately after the Question Hour, it ensures that these concerns do not get lost amid the procedural formalities of scheduled discussions.
- **Minimizing Disruptions:** Before the introduction of Zero Hour, attempts by opposition members to raise urgent issues during the Question Hour often led to disruptions, undermining the government's accountability mechanisms. With Zero Hour, members have a designated time to discuss these issues, thus preventing interruptions and enhancing the quality of legislative debate.
- **Promoting Public Engagement:** Zero Hour encourages greater participation from elected representatives, enabling them to voice constituents' concerns directly. This practice not only fosters a sense of responsibility among members but also bridges the gap between the government and the public, enhancing transparency and trust in the legislative process.
- **Setting a Precedent:** The successful implementation of Zero Hour in Himachal Pradesh could serve as a model for other state assemblies, promoting the adoption of similar practices nationwide. This could lead to a more engaged and accountable legislative framework across India.

In conclusion, the introduction of Zero Hour in the Himachal Pradesh Legislative Assembly is a progressive move that

enhances the efficiency of legislative processes, promotes accountability, and strengthens the democratic fabric of the state.

## **Question 2:**

**Analyze the role of legislative practices such as Zero Hour in strengthening democracy at the state level in India. What are the potential challenges in its implementation?(250 words)**

## **Model Answer:**

Legislative practices like Zero Hour play a crucial role in strengthening democracy at the state level in India by ensuring accountability, enhancing public engagement, and fostering transparent governance.

- **Strengthening Democratic Practices:** Zero Hour allows elected representatives to address urgent issues directly affecting their constituents, thus empowering them to participate actively in the legislative process. This practice enhances the accountability of the government by ensuring that it remains responsive to the public's needs and concerns.
- **Facilitating Open Dialogue:** By providing a dedicated time for discussing urgent matters, Zero Hour promotes open dialogue between the government and the opposition. This dialogue is essential for healthy democratic discourse, as it encourages different viewpoints to be expressed and debated

- in a structured manner.
- Encouraging Participation: Legislative practices like Zero Hour encourage greater participation from members of the assembly, making them more engaged and proactive in addressing local issues. This increased involvement can lead to more effective governance and better representation of the public's interests.

#### Challenges in Implementation:

- Discipline and Time Management: Ensuring that the Zero Hour remains effective requires discipline from both the Speaker and the members. Without proper time management and adherence to rules, the intended purpose of addressing urgent matters could be undermined.
- Potential for Abuse: There is a risk that members might misuse Zero Hour to raise frivolous or non-urgent issues, which could dilute the importance of the practice and lead to legislative inefficiency.
- Balancing Act: The challenge lies in balancing the time allotted for Zero Hour with the regular legislative business. If not managed well, it could lead to delays in the assembly's scheduled activities.

Conclusion: Legislative practices such as Zero Hour are essential for reinforcing democracy at the state level in India. They promote accountability, transparency, and public engagement. However, careful implementation and adherence to

established norms are necessary to ensure that these practices fulfill their intended purpose without falling prey to potential challenges.

**Remember: These are just sample answers. It's important to further research and refine your responses based on your own understanding and perspective. Read entire HPAS Current Affairs.**



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**Relevance to the Himachal HPAS UPSC Prelims and Mains syllabus under the following topics:**



## **Himachal HPAS Prelims:**

- **General Studies Paper 1:** Indian Polity and Governance: Questions may focus on the

structure, functioning, and roles of legislative bodies, including the significance of Zero Hour in enhancing accountability and legislative efficiency.

**Current Events of National and International Importance:** The recent introduction of Zero Hour in Himachal Pradesh could be a part of current affairs questions assessing candidates' awareness of state legislative developments.

## ***Himachal HPAS Mains:***

- **General Studies Paper II: Governance, Constitution, Polity, Social Justice:** Understanding the procedural aspects of the legislative assembly, including innovations like Zero Hour, falls under governance and constitutional mechanisms.
  - **Ethics in Public Administration:** The introduction of Zero Hour can be linked to ethical governance practices, highlighting the importance of addressing public concerns and maintaining transparency in legislative functions.
  - **General Studies Paper II: Constitutional Provisions and Governance:** Candidates may be asked to discuss the role of legislative assemblies in democratic governance, including mechanisms like Zero Hour that facilitate public participation and address urgent issues.
- Issues Related to the Functioning of Legislatures:** Questions might focus on the challenges and opportunities presented by practices like Zero Hour in improving legislative performance and accountability.



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- Option 1
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