

### **3. 250<sup>th</sup> Session of Rajya Sabha - Rajya Sabha: Role, Journey and Importance**

**Prelims Level: Parliament**

**Mains Level: GS-II Parliament-Structure and Functioning.**

#### **Background:**

- The origin of Rajya Sabha can be traced back to 1919, in pursuance to the Government of India Act, 1919, the Council of States was created.
- This Council of States, however, hardly reflected any federal features, as its most members were nominated.
- The Council continued to function till India became independent.

#### **The Rajya Sabha:**

- The Rajya Sabha, in its present form came into being in 1952.
- Its Hindi nomenclature was adopted in 1954.
- The Rajya Sabha is to consist of not more than 250 members - 238 members representing the States and Union Territories, and 12 members nominated by the President.
- Rajya Sabha is a permanent body and is not subject to dissolution.
- However, one third of the members retire every second year, and are replaced by newly elected members.
- Each member is elected for a term of six years.
- The Vice President of India is the ex-officio Chairman of Rajya Sabha.
- The House also elects a Deputy Chairman from among its members.
- Besides, there is also a panel of "Vice Chairmen" in the Rajya Sabha. The senior most Minister, who is a member of Rajya Sabha, is appointed by the Prime Minister as Leader of the House
- Rajya Sabha has been an integral part of the socio-economic transformation of our country

#### **Two Exclusive Powers of the Rajya Sabha:**

- It can with the support of two-thirds of its members delist a subject under the exclusive State List and declare it to be of national importance, empowering Parliament to legislate on it.
- It can create one or more new All India Services.
- Is the Rajya Sabha necessary today?

### **Argument Against:**

- Lok Sabha that has representation from several regional parties more than adequately represents a federal country, with no necessity for a second house.
- Rajya Sabha has been seen as the backdoor entry for the politicians who have lost the general elections.
- Rajya Sabha has become a haven for losers in elections, crony capitalists, compromised journalists and party fundraisers.

### **Arguments in Favour:**

- RS have been deliberately designed to provide the necessary checks and balance on the powers of the central government, from passing inadequate or ill-considered bills.
- It upholds the idea of federalism, by providing the states a pathway to give their views and opinions.
- It is virtually impossible to abolish the Rajya Sabha without adopting a new Indian Constitution, as it is likely to be interpreted as a "basic structure" of the Indian Constitution.

### **Structural Reforms needed in Rajya Sabha**

- The MPs should be directly elected by the citizens of a state, this will reduce cronyism and patronage appointments, improving the accountability.
- There should be equal representation for each state (say, five members) so that large states do not dominate the proceedings in the House.

### **Other Facts:**

- Representation of women in Rajya Sabha –have increased from 15 members in 1952 to 26 members in 2019.
- The Rajya Sabha since its inception had played an important role in shaping social change, economic transformation, industrial development, health, education, agriculture, environment and national security. Also, the House's landmark legislations have enabled the country to be a successful Parliamentary Democracy.