

**AGAHI, 2019**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE RULES**

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These rules will be hereby referred to as the RGNUL parliamentary debate rules and must be conformed to whilst participating for this very edition of the Agahi.

The 9th annual parliamentary debating competition Agahi 2019 will follow the „3-on-3“ Asian parliamentary style of debating governed by the following rules, regulations, and guidelines.

### **1. FORMAT OF THE TOURNAMENT**

- a. Each debating match will consist of two teams; one to propose the motion and one to oppose it. The team proposing may be known as „The Proposition“, „The Affirmative“ or „The Government“. The team opposing may be known as „The Opposition“ or „The Negative“. Teams will be designated as the Proposition or the Opposition for each round of the competition.
- b. Each debate shall be adjudicated upon by a panel comprising of an odd number of adjudicators. One of these shall be designated as Chairperson. In situations as per the discretion of the adjudication core (only in rounds before the „Break“), a debate may be adjudicated by a single experienced adjudicator.
- c. Each debate shall be timed by a timekeeper. In the absence of a timekeeper, a member of the adjudication panel will time the speeches.
- d. Teams will comprise the following members.
  - i. AFFIRMATIVE
    1. Prime Minister, or First Affirmative.
    2. Deputy Prime Minister, or Second Affirmative.
    3. Government Whip, or Third Affirmative.

ii. NEGATIVE

1. Leader of the Opposition, or First Negative.
2. Deputy Leader of the Opposition, or Second Negative.
3. Opposition Whip, or Third Negative.

e. Debaters will speak in the following order:

- i. Prime Minister
- ii. Leader of Opposition
- iii. Deputy Prime Minister
- iv. Deputy Leader of Opposition
- v. Government Whip
- vi. Opposition Whip
- vii. Opposition reply
- viii. Government reply

f. Common minute will not be given within reply speeches.

- g. Speakers not „holding the floor“ may not rise during a speech unless it is to offer a „Point of Information“ (see Part Five of this document). Speakers doing so, or considered to be heckling, barracking or whose behavior is interfering with the acceptable course of a debate will be declared „out of order“ or will be „called to order“ by the Chairperson.

## 2. MOTIONS

- a. The motions for each round will reflect a specific and well-known theme, and each round of the competition will comprise of three choices of motions.

- b. On release of the motions, both teams will rank the motions on the basis of their preferences. The third option of both teams is immediately dropped. If there remains a clear favourite, that motion is directly selected.
- c. In case of an undecided tie between the two remaining motions, the motion for that round and match-up will be decided on the basis of toss of coin. It is the responsibility of the timekeeper to oversee the choice and selection of the motion.

### 3. PREPARATION

- a. Match-ups and venues will be announced before motions are revealed.
- b. Once the motions are released, teams must immediately rank their motions, select the motion in the presence of the runner and/or the adjudicators of that round and proceed to their venues, where the motion is to be decided upon. From the time of release of the motions, teams have 30 minutes preparation time until the commencement of the debate in that round.
- c. The Affirmative have the right to prepare in chambers (venue).
- d. Printed and prepared materials may be used during the preparation period. No access to electronic media or electronic storage or retrieval devices is permitted after motions have been released. This includes but is not limited to, all kinds of computers, electronic data banks, cellular phones, etc. Printed and prepared materials may be accessed during a debate, but may not be used by a speaker holding the floor.
- e. Teams must prepare on their own. Once motions have been released, there must be no contact between debaters in a particular team and coaches, trainers, friends, observers or any other individual for the purposes of assistance in the context of the debate. Such contact and assistance is deemed as „cheating“ and will be punished strictly.

- f. Teams failing to arrive in time for the debate will forfeit that particular round.

#### 4. TIMING

- a. It is the duty of the timekeeper, or of a panel member or Chair (in absence of a timekeeper), to time all the speeches in each round.
- b. The timing of each speech starts at the moment that the member begins speaking.
- c. Times for speeches:
  - i. Substantive Speeches: 6 + 1 minutes.
  - ii. Reply Speeches: 3+1 minutes in all rounds.
- d. Time signals will be given in the following manner:
  - i. End of first minute - single knock of the gavel.
  - ii. End of sixth minute - single knock of the gavel.
  - iii. End of seventh minute - double knock of the gavel.
- e. Reply Speeches:
  - i. End of third minute- single knock of the gavel.
  - ii. End of Fourth minute- Double knock of the gavel.
- f. Once the double knock of the gavel has sounded, speakers have a 20-second „grace period“, during which they should conclude their speech. After this grace period has elapsed, there will be a continuous knocking of the gavel, and adjudicators must disregard the rest of that particular speech. Speakers continuing after the „grace period“ can also be penalized by the adjudicators in the Method category.

- g. If the speaker concludes his/her speech before the second single knock of the gavel, he or she should be penalized under Method and possibly also under Matter. The latter, assuming that less matter was advanced, or that it was clearly underdeveloped.

## 5. POINTS OF INFORMATION

- a. Points of Information (POIs) may be offered during the six substantive speeches only, after the first single knock of the gavel and up to the second single knock of the gavel. Points of Information may not be offered during the first and last minutes of substantive speeches. If a Point of Information is offered in the first or the last minute of a constructive speech, it is the duty of the speaker holding the floor to reject the same as being out of order. Only if the speaker holding the floor fails to do the same, the chair of the adjudicator panel may very briefly intervene and call the house to order.
- b. A POI must be indicated by a member of an opposing team rising from his/her seat. A member offering a Point of Information may draw attention to the offer by saying “on that point Sir/Madam,” or a short word calling attention to the member of the opposing team raising the point of information. If entire questions are posed in the tag this can be marked down under method.
- c. A member holding the floor must respond to an opposing member, or members offering POI’s, in one of the following ways.
  - i. A clear gesture or hand signal rejecting the offer.
  - ii. A verbal rejection of the offer, or
  - iii. A verbal acceptance of the offer.
- d. If a POI is accepted, the point should be phrased as a question, or clarification, or comment, and ideally made in no more than 15 seconds. Points of Information should be such that they allow the member holding the floor some chance of responding.

- e. After a POI has been offered, no further clarifications may be sought either by the speaker holding the floor or by the member offering the Point of Information, except strictly in situations where the Point of Information is clearly inaudible, and therefore a repetition of the same is necessitated.
- f. Once a POI is accepted the speaker holding the stage is bound to give adequate time for the completion of the question.
- g. Points of Information are marked for their strategic use under Method, and for their content under Matter. Unwarranted use of points of information can be marked down under Manner.

## 6. DEFINITIONS

- a. The definition is the interpretation of the motion as put forward by the Prime Minister, or First Affirmative, in his opening remarks. The onus for establishing how the definition ties in with the given motion lies completely upon the Prime Minister. All subsequent speakers have a purely clarifying role (if any) in this regard.
- b. The definition should be reasonable.
- c. The definition should state the issue or issues arising out of the motion to be debated, state the meanings of any terms in the motion requiring clarification and display clear and logical links to the wording and spirit of the motion.
- d. The definition should not be:
  - i. A truism (a matter stated as fact).
  - ii. A tautology (a definition which, in development, proves itself).
  - iii. Place set (setting an unnaturally restrictive geographical or spatial location as its major parameter).

- iv. Time set (setting an unnaturally restrictive chronological duration as its main parameter).
  - v. Wholly unreasonable (displaying no clear or logical links to the motion). This is referred to as „squirreling“. As mentioned earlier squirreling essentially implies that a definition has been proposed which is clearly not in keeping with the spirit of the motion.
- e. The Negative may only challenge the definition advanced by the Affirmative on the basis of one of the above-mentioned conditions, and must clearly state which individual condition based upon which it is challenging the definition.
- f. The Negative may not challenge a definition supplied by the Affirmative on the basis that:
- i. The definition does not adhere to the theme provided for the round
  - ii. Its own definition is MORE reasonable.
  - iii. A better debate will result. Nor may the Negative re-define terms or words contained in the motion so that a completely different debate is thereby set up. However, a Negative may contend with the specific or general approach to terminology supplied by the definition of the Affirmative.

## 7. CHALLENGING THE DEFINITION

- a. The definitional challenge must be made in the speech of the Leader of the Opposition, following a clear statement that the definition is being rejected. The onus for establishing the definitional challenge lies completely upon the Leader of the Opposition. Subsequent speakers are strictly permitted a purely clarificatory role (if any) in this regard.
- b. In the event of a challenge, the Leader of the Opposition must justify his/her rejection by supplying the grounds on which the original definition has been rejected. Furthermore, a substitute definition must be supplied, which the Opposition benches must then go on to



negate. The opposition is also expected to, in the case of the definition being a squirrel, place or time set to submit some arguments to negate the definition proposed by the government, in the sense of an even if, i.e. that even if the challenge doesn't stand, these arguments would negate the government's case.

- c. If the Leader of the Opposition does not challenge the definition, no other speaker may do so.
- d. The onus to prove that a definition is unreasonable is on the Opposition, and should not be presumed by the adjudicators.
- e. Adjudicators should not indicate during the debate whether the definitional challenge has succeeded. They cannot indicate which definition they find to be (more) acceptable. The final decision as to whether a definitional challenge has succeeded must take into consideration all 8 speeches in any debate.
- f. Neither team should abandon either the definitions or the challenges of its opening speakers.
- g. Definitions should not require members of the house to have access to, or possess, specific or expert knowledge.
- h. If a definitional challenge is upheld, the team making the challenge does not necessarily win by the largest possible margin. If the definitional challenge fails, then the team making such a challenge does not necessarily lose by the largest possible margin. Adjudicators are expected to make a holistic decision about the debate on the parameters including the success or failure of the challenge, as well as how well both teams defend their definitions and fulfil their role in proposing and opposing the definitions they have assumed. A definitional challenge should take place in the rarest of rare cases.

## 8. MATTER

- a. „Matter“ relates to the issues in debate, the case being presented and the material used to substantiate argumentation.
- b. The issues under debate should be correctly prioritized (by teams) and ordered (by individuals), dealing with the most important/pertinent first. This guideline may be departed from, in order to preserve logical continuity and coherence.
- c. Matter should be logical and well-reasoned.
- d. Matter should be relevant, both to the issue in contention and the cases being advanced.
- e. Matter should be persuasive.
- f. Matter will be assessed from the viewpoint of „the average reasonable person“. Adjudicators must disregard any specialist knowledge they have, even though pertinent to the issues under debate.
- g. Bias will not affect an adjudicator's assessment (objective) or evaluation (subjective) of a debate. Debaters must not be discriminated against on the basis of religion, sex, race, nationality, sexual preference, age, social status, accent or any disability.
- h. A debater should ideally take at least two points of information during a speech. The Opposition Whip may not introduce any new matter in to the debate. Similarly, no new matter may be introduced in both Reply speeches.

## 9. MANNER

- a. Manner refers to the presentation and delivery style of a speaker.
- b. The following list represents some of the elements which are, or may be, subsumed under Manner. The list is intended as a guide, rather than as a number of marking categories. It is the combination of these elements (rather than the accomplishment of each), in various proportions that contributes to an individual speaker's style. The major influence on an adjudicator must be: „Is the speaker's manner EFFECTIVE in advancing the case?“
- c. The following are to be considered:
  - i. Vocal Style: Volume, clarity, pronunciation, pace, intonation, fluency, confidence, and authority.
  - ii. Language: Conversational.
  - iii. Use of notes: Should not distract, should not be read.
  - iv. Eye Contact: With audience.
  - v. Gesture: Natural, appropriate.
  - vi. Stance
  - vii. Dress: (only an issue if really inappropriate to the place or occasion).
  - viii. Sincerity: Believability
  - ix. Personal Attacks
  - x. Humour: Effectiveness of and appropriateness.
- d. Debater and adjudicators in the competition must be aware that they will experience many different debating styles different colleges and countries. There is no single „correct“ or „right“ style to adopt in this competition. Nor should a speaker's style be dismissed as inappropriate in the national or regional context of the adjudicators or debaters who witness it.

- e. As with Matter, personal bias must not be allowed to influence an adjudicator's assessment of Manner.

## 10. METHOD

- a. Method shall be comprising of Individual Method; Team Method, Overall response to the debate.
- b. Individual Method pertains to the structure and organization of an individual speech. This may be evident in a reasonably clear outline of the responsibilities of the speaker and the order of the issues to be dealt with in his/her speech. It may also be apparent in the degree of fluency with which a speech moves from one point to another in a clearly logical sequence. Similarly, a speaker may „signpost“ his/her transitions from one phase to another.
- c. Individual Method pertains to the „balance“ of a speech. Whereby, an equable division of speaking time is made to allow each of the phases of the speech a reasonable time for development (opening remarks, rebuttal, own points, summary, etc).
- d. Individual Method pertains to good time management and good time keeping.
- e. Team Method pertains to the effectiveness of the team's case organization and structure as a whole.
- f. Team Method pertains to the equable division of roles (speakers) and responsibilities during a debate and the effective discharge of those roles and responsibilities.
- g. Response to the dynamics of the debate pertains to the reactive abilities of speakers and teams to the ongoing strategies being employed by both sides, and the shifts in the balance of power from one side to another.

- h. Teams and speakers should respond to clear strategic issues, not minor „slips of the tongue“ or insignificant points.
- i. Dynamic response could also be reflected in Matter marks for a speaker in cases where the identification of a vital point, the cogent analysis of this point in the context of the debate, and a balanced attack on the same, is developed in an ensuing speech.
- j. Team members may keep time and signal members holding the floor. Time signals may not be spoken aloud. Speakers may also keep their own time.

## 11. MARKING THE DEBATE

- a. At the end of every debate, each adjudicator must complete their adjudication forms.
- b. There are no draws in competitive debating.
- c. Teams failing to turn up for the debate on time, and with no valid reason, will lose the debate by the widest possible margin. The other team will then face-off against a stand-by swing team [non-competitive for the purposes of the competition] constituted by the host University. Failure to turn up for two rounds in the preliminary phase will result in automatic disqualification from the tournament.
- d. For constructive speeches, marks shall be awarded to speakers based on the following:
  - i. An „average“ speech shall be awarded:
    - 1. Matter: 30/40
    - 2. Manner: 30/40
    - 3. Method: 15/20
    - 4. Total: 75/100

- ii. A speaker may not under any circumstance be awarded less than 28/40 in Matter and Manner, and less than 13/20 in Method. Therefore, the worst speech in the history of debating would still get 69/100.
  - iii. A speaker may not under any circumstance be awarded more than 32/40 in Matter and Manner, and more than 17/20 in Method. Therefore, the best speech in the history of the world would get no more than 81/100.
- e. For reply speeches, marks shall be awarded to speakers based on the following:
- i. An „average“ reply speech shall be awarded as a normal substantive speech and then the marks will be halved. Thus, an average speech shall 37.5/50 (75/100).
  - ii. A speaker may not under any circumstance be awarded less than 34.5/50(69/100)
  - iii. A speaker may not under any circumstance be awarded more than 40.5/50 (81/100)
- f. The „average“ mark for an „average team“ is therefore:  $75+75+75+37.5 = 262.5/350$
- g. The lowest possible score is therefore:  $69+ 69+69+34.5 = 241.5/350$
- h. The highest possible score is therefore:  $81+ 81+81+40 = 283.5/350$

## 12. WIN LOSS MARGIN

- a. Adjudicators must determine, at the conclusion of a debate whether the overall margin of win/loss separating the teams was (independently of speaker scores) close, clear or a thrashing margin on a scale of 1 to 12.
- i. Close win = 1 to 4 points.
  - ii. Clear win = 4 to 8 points.
  - iii. Thrashing = 8 to 12 points.

- b. Win/Loss Margins lower than 1 and higher than 12 are not permitted on any count.
- c. The difference between the cumulative speaker scores of the two teams in the match need not be the same as the win loss margin.
- d. However, the team which wins the debate must have a higher cumulative score.

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