Adjournment Motion

Why in news?

Recently opposition parties moved an adjournment motion in the Lok Sabha, citing the need for urgent discussions on the ethnic violence in Manipur.

What is adjournment motion?

- The adjournment motion is a form of censure of the government.
- It originated in the House of Commons in the United Kingdom.
- It was established through *Government of India Act, 1919* in India under the rules of the pre-independent bicameral legislature.
- **Lok Sabha** - It is introduced only in Lok Sabha to draw attention of the House to a definite matter of urgent public importance.
- It involves an element of censure against the government, so Rajya Sabha is not permitted to use the motion.
- **Support** - An adjournment motion needs the support of 50 members to be admitted.

When adjournment motion can be moved?

Normal Business	Adjournment Motion
To raise matters in the House, MPs must inform the presiding officers in advance	The Scheduled business can be set aside by a procedural mechanism called the "adjournment motion".
It is available in both houses	Only Lok Sabha has this provision as it involves an element of censure
MPs inform to speaker of Lok Sabha and Chairman of Rajya Sabha in advance	The Speaker has to decide whether to allow the MP to move the motion.
This requirement ensures the government can collect information to respond to the MPs, the information of bills and budget in the agenda of the government is passed to MPs to prepare for debate.	This Rule in Lok Sabha allows an MP to urge the Speaker to adjourn the House's business "to discuss a definite matter of urgent public importance".
MPs can only discuss a matter that is on the day's business.	It results in the House dropping its scheduled list of business to discuss this urgent matter.

What are the criteria for adjournment motion?

- **Time -** The discussion on the Adjournment motion must be at least two hours and thirty minutes (*2hrs and 3o minutes*).

- **Coverage** - It should *not cover more than one topic*.
- It should be restricted to one issue which had a recent occurrence.
- It should not be a topic that is already discussed or under discussion, in the same session.
- It should not involve the matter of privileges.
- It should not contain topics that are under adjudication by the court.
- It should not be a matter that can be raised under a distinct motion.

What is the significance of adjournment motion?

- **Collective responsibility** - Article 75 says that the Council of Ministers is collectively responsible to the House of the People.
- **Rule Book** - Due to doctrine of collective responsibility, in 1952 adjournment motion found a place in Lok Sabha rule book.
- **Urgent action -** G.V.Mavlankar the first speaker of Lok Sabha called the adjournment motion a very exceptional thing.
- The members should resort to this procedural device when the "occasion is of such a character that something very grave, something which affects the whole country, its safety, its interests and all that is happening, and the House must pay its attention immediately".
- **Accountability -** It ensures a responsive and responsible character of the Government, to address the matter of urgent public importance.

The main issue with the adjournment motion is the reluctance of the Lok Sabha Speakers to allow these motions. Most Lok Sabha have spent ***less than 3%*** *of their time on adjournment motions. The only exception being the* 9th Lok Sabha which spent almost 5% (36 hours) of its time on adjournment motion.

What are the ways for the MPs to draw attention of the house?

About	Lok Sabha	Rajya Sabha
Short duration Discussion- A debate without voting	Rule 193	Rule 176
A motion with a vote	Rule 184	Rule 167
To discuss urgent matter	Adjournment motion	Rule 267
Collective responsibility	No confidence motion	Not available

What is the issue in Rajya Sabha?

- Since Rajya Sabha Rule Book does not provide for an adjournment motion, hence rule 267 was used to suspend pre decided agenda in the House to raise urgent matters.
- To know more about Rule 267 - Click here
- **Amendment** - In 2002 it was amended to only allow the suspension of a Rule for a matter related to the business listed before the Council of that day.
- So now, rule 267 can be used only to suspend to take up matters that are already on

the list of business.
- But opposition parties want to invoke Rule 267 of Rajya Sabha which favoured a longer period of discussion.
- The Rajya Sabha agrees only to invoke short duration discussion to discuss Manipur issue.

What is a short duration discussion?

- **About** - As per rule 176 of Rajya Sabha, if the Chairman is satisfied that the matter is urgent and is of sufficient public importance to be raised in the Council at an early date.
- He may admit the notice and in consultation with the Leader of the Council fix the date on which such matter may be taken up for discussion and allow such time for discussion, not exceeding two and a half hours.

References

1. Indian Express | Explained Adjournment motion
2. Indian Express | Explained various ways to draw attention of house
3. News 18 | Adjournment motion

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