India’s First Motion of Confidence

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Why in News?

A 1952 Lok Sabha by-election in Aruppukottai, Tamil Nadu result prompted the then Madras Chief Minister C. Rajagopalachari (Rajaji) to seek a vote of confidence in the State Assembly.

Historical Context

- **First General Elections -** India held its first general elections in **1951–52**. In Madras State, elections to the Lok Sabha and State Assembly were held simultaneously.
- **Rajaji becomes Chief Minister-** C. Rajagopalachari assumed office as Chief Minister on **April 10, 1952**.
- The Congress was the **single largest party but did not have an outright majority** in the Assembly, requiring support from other groups.
- **Aruppukottai bypoll -** The Lok Sabha seat became vacant following the resignation of **U. Muthuramalinga Thevar**, a prominent Forward Bloc leader.
- **Rajaji's referendum approach-** Rajaji publicly presented the by-election as a test of popular support for his newly formed government.
- The Congress candidate **Rajathi Kunjithapatham** contested against **M.D. Ramasamy** of the Forward Bloc (Marxist Group).
- **Unexpected result -** The Forward Bloc candidate won by **18,835 votes**.
- Rajaji interpreted the defeat as an adverse indication regarding public confidence in his government.

The First Confidence Motion

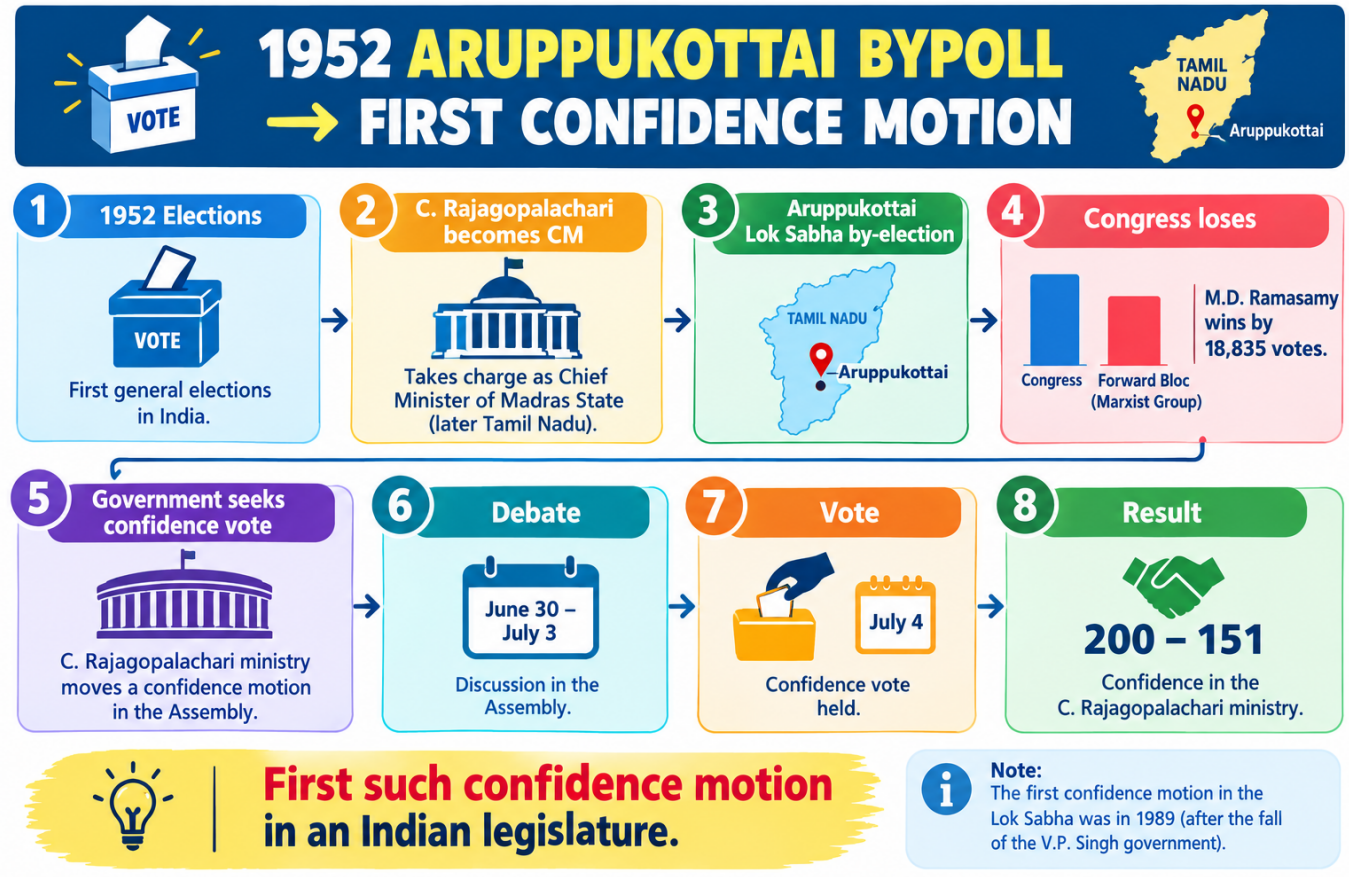
- Following the Aruppukottai result, Rajaji's government decided to establish its support on the floor of the Assembly rather than relying merely on the by-election result.
- The confidence motion was moved by **C. Subramaniam**, the finance minister and Leader of the House.
- The debate began on June 30, 1952.
- The Speaker, **J. Sivashanmugam Pillai**, noted that this was the first motion of its kind in an Indian legislature.
- Since there were no specific Indian rules governing such a motion, parliamentary practice in Britain was followed.
- After a debate involving 71 members, the government won the confidence vote 200–151.

Constitutional Significance

- The episode is important because it illustrates the development of parliamentary conventions in post-Independence India.
- **Core principle -** Executive legitimacy → majority support in the legislature → collective

responsibility.

- Today, this principle is constitutionally reflected in **Article 164(2)** for State governments, the Council of Ministers is collectively responsible to the Legislative Assembly.
- At the Union level, the corresponding provision is **Article 75(3)**, under which the Council of Ministers is collectively responsible to the Lok Sabha.



Reference

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