



UNDERSTANDING PARLIAMENTARY MOTIONS IN INDIA: GS-II:

The Indian Parliament, a cornerstone of the nation's democracy, functions through its structured procedures, debates, and motions. Among these, **no-confidence motions** and **adjournment motions** hold significant political and constitutional importance. These motions, pivotal in holding the government accountable, provide insight into the evolving dynamics of Indian parliamentary democracy.

Types of Parliamentary Motions

Parliamentary motions are mechanisms that allow members of the legislature to initiate discussions, propose decisions, or challenge the functioning of the House or its officers. Two significant motions include:



1. Adjournment Motion

- Adjournment motions are brought to draw the attention of the House to urgent



public matters requiring immediate discussion.

- Typically used by the Opposition, they interrupt normal proceedings and demand debate on a specific issue.
- Acceptance of an adjournment motion signifies a censure of the government, as it suggests a failure to address critical issues.

2. No-Confidence Motion

- A no-confidence motion questions the credibility or impartiality of a particular individual, office bearer, or the government itself.
- In the Lok Sabha, a no-confidence motion against the Speaker or the Prime Minister can be a dramatic moment of political reckoning.
- It requires a minimum of **50 members to support the motion for it to be admitted.**

Historical Instances of No-Confidence Motions

1. Against Lok Sabha Speaker G V Mavalankar (1954)

The first-ever attempt to remove a presiding officer in India's Parliament was made in 1954, targeting **G V Mavalankar**, the first Speaker of the Lok Sabha. The motion accused him of partiality and suppressing Opposition voices by disallowing adjournment motions. After an acrimonious two-hour debate, the motion was rejected. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru defended Mavalankar, emphasizing the Speaker's impartiality and dismissing the allegations as baseless.

2. Against Speaker Sardar Hukum Singh (1966)

In 1966, Socialist leader **Madhu Limaye** moved a no-confidence motion against Speaker Hukum Singh. The motion did not proceed as fewer than 50 members supported it. The incident reflected the difficulty of garnering adequate backing for such resolutions, especially against sitting Speakers.

3. Against Speaker Balram Jakhar (1987)

Another motion was moved in 1987 by **CPI (M) MP Somnath Chatterjee** against Speaker Balram Jakhar. As in previous cases, this too was unsuccessful, showcasing the robust challenges to removing the presiding officer, particularly when the government enjoys a



majority.

Current Motion against the Vice-President

The latest development in Indian parliamentary history is the Opposition **INDIA bloc's notice to remove Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankar**, who also serves as the **ex-officio Chairperson of the Rajya Sabha**. This motion marks the first-ever attempt to unseat a Vice-President from this position. The Opposition accuses Dhankar of being "explicitly partisan" and acting as a "spokesperson" for the government.

While this motion is unprecedented, the procedures and standards for its success remain stringent, making it highly unlikely to succeed unless a significant political shift occurs.

Procedure for No-Confidence Motions

The Constitution of India and the parliamentary rules prescribe specific steps for processing no-confidence motions:

1. Notice and Admission

A written notice of at least 14 days is required, submitted to the Secretary General of the respective house.

- The Chair (usually the Deputy Speaker or Deputy Chairperson) admits the motion after verifying compliance with procedural norms.

2. Initial Support

- A minimum of 50 members in the Lok Sabha (or its equivalent in the Rajya Sabha) must rise to support the motion before it is formally taken up for debate.

3. Debate and Voting

- The House debates the motion, where members present their arguments for or against it.
- The final vote determines the outcome. A simple majority of the then members of the House is necessary for the motion to pass.

Impact of No-Confidence Motions



The implications of no-confidence motions extend beyond immediate political calculations. They affect governance, legislative priorities, and public perception in several ways:

1. Accountability and Transparency

- No-confidence motions serve as tools for holding the government or presiding officers accountable for their actions or decisions.
- They bring critical issues to the forefront and ensure public scrutiny.

2. Political Significance

- Such motions reflect the state of political alliances and Opposition strength. Even if unsuccessful, they may bolster the Opposition's narrative or tarnish the ruling party's Game.

3. Procedural Integrity

- These motions reinforce parliamentary norms, ensuring the functioning of democratic institutions is not compromised.

Challenges to Success

Historically, the bar for passing no-confidence motions is set high:

- **Majority Advantage:** The government or ruling coalition typically commands a majority, making it challenging for the Opposition to win.
- **Procedural Rigidity:** Strict rules and multi-step processes can deter frivolous motions but also limit their feasibility.
- **Political Realities:** Cross-party support is often necessary, which can be difficult to achieve given ideological differences.

In the case of the current motion against Vice-President Dhankar, the numerical strength of the ruling NDA coalition in the Rajya Sabha makes the motion's success improbable.

Conclusion

Parliamentary motions like adjournment and no-confidence resolutions are vital instruments in a vibrant democracy. They embody the principle of checks and balances,



allowing elected representatives to question authority and highlight governance issues. The history of no-confidence motions against presiding officers, though marked by limited success, underscores their importance in upholding democratic principles.

The ongoing motion against the Vice-President marks a historic moment, signaling the Opposition's growing willingness to confront the ruling establishment. While the procedural hurdles and political arithmetic suggest the motion's likely failure, it is a powerful reminder of Parliament's role as a forum for dissent and debate. Ultimately, such motions, whether they succeed or not, contribute to strengthening India's democratic fabric by fostering dialogue and accountability.

Main Practice Question

Question:

Discuss the constitutional provisions, procedural requirements, and political implications of no-confidence motions in the Indian Parliament. Illustrate your answer with historical examples of such motions, including the recent attempt against the Vice-President of India. (250 words)

Answer Guidelines

1. Introduction (40-50 words):

Begin with the constitutional basis of no-confidence motions, referencing relevant Articles of the Constitution (e.g., Article 94 for the Lok Sabha Speaker) and their role in ensuring accountability in parliamentary democracy. Briefly mention their significance in challenging the government or presiding officers.

2. Procedural Requirements (60-70 words):

Outline the key steps:

- Submission of a written notice with a minimum 14-day advance period.
- Support of at least 50 members to admit the motion.
- Debate and voting requiring a simple majority of the then members of the House.

Mention that the Speaker or Chairperson does not preside over debates on



motions against them.

3. Historical Examples (70-80 words):

Provide examples, such as:

- The 1954 motion against G V Mavalankar (Lok Sabha Speaker), alleging partiality.
- The 1987 motion against Balram Jakhar, also unsuccessful.
- The recent motion against Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankar, marking the first attempt against the Rajya Sabha Chair.
- Highlight that procedural hurdles and numerical strength of the ruling coalition often prevent such motions from succeeding.

4. Political Implications and Conclusion (60-70 words):

Discuss how these motions promote accountability but also reflect political dynamics. Conclude by emphasizing their role in a vibrant democracy, irrespective of their success or failure.





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