



KAMARAJ IAS ACADEMY
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Parliamentary procedure of 'guillotine'

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Why is in news? Amidst the ongoing stalemate in Parliament, some MPs said the government may guillotine the demands for grants and pass the Finance Bill without any discussion in the Lok Sabha

What is guillotine?

A guillotine is an apparatus designed for efficiently carrying out executions by beheading.

It consists of a large, weighted blade that is raised to the top of a tall, erect frame and released to fall on the neck of a condemned person secured at the bottom of the frame, executing them in a single, clean pass.

The origin of the exact device as well as the term can be found in France.

The design of the guillotine was intended to make capital punishment more reliable and less painful in accordance with new Enlightenment ideas of human rights.

Prior to use of the guillotine, France had inflicted manual beheading and a variety of methods of execution, many of which were more gruesome and required a high level of precision and skill to carry out successfully.

The guillotine is most widely associated with the French Revolution, when it became popular with the revolutionaries meting out capital punishment to members and supporters of the Ancien Regime, including King Louis XVI and Queen Marie Antoinette.

It was a method of execution in France until the country stopped capital punishment in 1981

'Guillotine' in legislative parlance

In legislative parlance, to "guillotine" means to bunch together and fast-track the passage of financial business. It is a fairly common procedural exercise in Lok Sabha during the Budget Session.

After the Budget is presented, Parliament goes into recess for about three weeks, during which time the House Standing Committees examine Demands for Grants for various Ministries, and prepare reports.

After Parliament reassembles, the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) draws up a schedule for discussions on the Demands for Grants. Given the limitation of time, the House cannot take up the expenditure demands of all Ministries; therefore, the BAC identifies some important Ministries for discussions.

It usually lists Demands for Grants of the Ministries of Home, Defence, External Affairs, Agriculture, Rural Development and Human Resource Development.

Members utilise the opportunity to discuss the policies and working of Ministries.

Once the House is done with these debates, the Speaker applies the "guillotine", and all outstanding demands for grants are put to vote at once.

Kamaraj IAS Academy

Plot A P.127, AF block, 6 th street, 11th Main Rd, Shanthy Colony, Anna Nagar, Chennai, Tamil Nadu 600040
Phone: 044 4353 9988 / 98403 94477 / Whatsapp : 09710729833

This usually happens on the last day earmarked for the discussion on the Budget. The intention is to ensure timely passage of the Finance Bill, marking the completion of the legislative exercise with regard to the Budget.

A Brief about the recent case

With meetings called by presiding officers of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha failing to end the stalemate between the government and Opposition, there is uncertainty over whether the Budget Session will continue till its scheduled date of April 6.

Recently, for the seventh day in a row, proceedings in both the Houses were adjourned following chaotic scenes. Some MPs said the government may guillotine the demands for grants and pass the Finance Bill without any discussion in the Lok Sabha

The stalemate in Parliament

Parliament remains stalled as the government and opposition have been unable to constructively engage with each other.

While the opposition has been demanding a JPC (joint parliamentary committee) probe into the Adani issue, the government has been steadfast in demanding Rahul Gandhi should apologise for what they believe are his recent “anti-India” remarks.

At the meetings held by Speaker Om Birla for the Lok Sabha and Vice-President and Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar for the Upper House, the BJP maintained that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi could be allowed to put forward his point of view regarding his remarks on Indian democracy in London only if he was ready to apologise over the same. But the Congress rejected this while insisting on its demand that the government constitute a joint parliamentary committee (JPC) to probe the Adani issue.

With no end in sight any time soon for the ongoing stalemate, the government might have to guillotine together different demands and pass them en masse.