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Chapter – 3

Union Government

COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

The Council of Ministers includes the Cabinet ministers, state ministers, and deputy ministers with PM, as its head. Sub-clause 1A has been inserted to Article 75, which provides the total number of ministers along with the Prime Minister shall not exceed 15% of the total number of the members of the House of People w.e.f. 1.1.2004.

It is the prerogative of the PM that governs the selection of ministers. The Constitution lays down that a person joining the Council of Ministers must be a Member of Parliament. The PM can take in a person, who is not a Member of Parliament, but in such cases, the person has to contest and win election to a parliamentary seat within six months of assumption of office.

The Prime Minister takes note of several factors when selecting the ministers, such as: a) geographical representation, b) political base of a member, c) representation of a social mix of the electorate, d) individual capacity and capability, e) reward for loyalty, f) representation of backward classes, g) adequate representation to states in terms of population, and (h) a member's earlier performance, as a minister, if he had been one.

The PM is at the apex, followed by Cabinet rank minister, who wields an independent charge of a ministry. Ministers of State usually are accorded second rank within the portfolios assigned to the Cabinet Ministers. Sometimes, rather than having a minister of Cabinet rank, the PM may assign an independent charge of a portfolio to a minister of State. The Deputy Ministers are within the portfolio in the third rank and may look after various functions[3]. Parliamentary secretaries are also there to render aid and assistance to the Council of Ministers.

The entire Council of Minister work according to the principle of collective responsibility. They all swim and sink together. If a no-confidence motion gets passed the entire government has to resign.

Roles of Cabinet

The Cabinet performs the following roles:

- **As Prime Policy Maker**

    The Cabinet is the prime policy making body of the government. It looks into the areas that require formulation of new policies or incremental modifications to an existing policy/programme. The initiative in this regard is taken by the minister in charge of the department or ministry. The provisions in the proposed policy or a programme are reviewed in detail by the department/ministry concerned and once finalized it is placed before the Cabinet for approval.

- **As Prime Legislative Body**

    It is an integral part of the legislative system. Although the Parliament is the supreme law making body of the nation, legislation is essentially the handiwork of the Cabinet. It is the Cabinet that gives final shape to all government bills. It prepares the legislative agenda at the very start of every parliamentary session and decides upon the bills to be put forth. The inaugural speech of the President is also prepared by Cabinet. The President summons, prorogues, and dissolves the House on the advice of the Cabinet headed by the PM. All ordinances issued by the President are also prepared by the Cabinet. Thus, we see that Cabinet not only executes the policies but also provides leadership in most of the matters pertaining to legislation.

- **As an Advisory Body**

    The Cabinet is an advisory body to the President of India. Its advice is binding on the President in matters pertaining to his/her assent on a bill. It is the sole decision-making body on all policy matters and these decisions are conveyed to the President, who endorses them.

- **As a Coordinating Agency**

    The Cabinet is the coordinating agency for all ministries. All ministries/ departments do work in a harmonious and coordinating environment.

- **As Chief Executive Organ**

    Each Cabinet minister is the political head of his/her department. The principal aide is the Secretary, who functions, as the administrative head of the department. The Secretary is responsible for carrying out the policies. Though the minister does not interfere in the day-to-day working of the department, the secretary must keep him posted of all major developments, as the ultimate responsibility rests on the minister.

- **As Coordinator of Foreign and Defence Policies**

    Conduct of foreign relations, reception of diplomats, appointment of diplomats, and recognition or non-recognition of new states are done with

approval of the Cabinet. Treaties are negotiated and signed and Parliament is duly informed about these. The Cabinet also controls the foreign tours of the President and other ministers.

The Department, which is concerned with the defence of the country, is called the Defence Department. It is responsible for the organization of the entire forces and in making key appointments to the Army, Navy, and Air Force. It is this Department which, in consultation with the Cabinet, can take action on matters such as declaration of war, mobilization of troops, and calling off wars.

- **As Crisis Manager**

  Emergencies whether pertaining to external aggresion or failure of constitutional machinery in any state,its declaration is based on the recommendation of the Cabinet.

Activity

Highlight the grounds that make India a Republic.

CONCLUSION

A basic feature that characterizes the Parliamentary model is the presence of dual executives. The President of India is the constitutional head of the Indian State whereas the PM and his Cabinet are the real executive. The real executive remains in office, as long as it enjoys the confidence of the legislature. The PMO provides secretarial assistance to the Prime Minister. It is headed by the Principal Secretary. The role of PMO has evolved and varied under different Prime Ministers.

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