

Chapter 3. The Prime Minister and The Council of Ministers

Very Short Questions

Question 1: Who is known as the 'Keystone of the Cabinet arch'?

Answer: Prime Minister is known as the 'Keystone of the Cabinet arch'.

Question 2: Who appoints the Prime Minister?

Answer: President appoints the Prime Minister.

Question 3: Who is the Head of the Union Council of Ministers?

Answer: Prime Minister.

Question 4: How the Prime Minister is elected?

Answer: The leader of the political party securing absolute majority in the Lok Sabha is appointed by the President as the Prime Minister.

Question 5: Who is the real executive head and give reasons to support your answer?

Answer: The Prime Minister is the real executive head. He/She is the leader of the Council of Ministers and the Cabinet. He picks up the members of the Council of Ministers and distributes portfolios among them. He conducts and presides over the meetings and proceedings of the Cabinet.

Question 6: What is the term of office of the Prime Minister?

Answer: The term of the Prime Minister is 5 years. But, the Prime Minister is directly responsible to the Lok Sabha and can remain in office so long as he enjoys the majority support in the House of People-Lok Sabha.

Question 7: Mention one way by which the authority of the Prime Minister can be checked?

Answer: If the Prime Minister fails to carry out obligations or makes detrimental choices, then the members of the House pass a Motion of No-Confidence. This deems him 'not fit' to hold the position anymore. Thus, the authority of the Prime Minister can be checked.

Question 8: How is the Council of Ministers appointed?

Answer: The Council of Ministers is appointed by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister.

Question 9: To which house is the Council of Ministers responsible?

Answer: Council of Ministers is collectively responsible to the Lok Sabha.

Question 10: What do the Ministers do before joining the Council of Ministers?

Answer: The Ministers have to administer an oath of secrecy before joining the Council of Ministers.

Question 11: Who administers the Oath of office to the Council of Ministers?

Answer: The President of India administers the oath of office to the Council of Ministers.

Question 12: Shri Chaman Lai is appointed as Council of Minister, but he is not the member of either House of Parliament. What will he do?

Answer: Shri Chaman Lai has to seek the membership of Parliament within six months or resign before the expiry of the period.

Question 13: Under what provision can a non-member of the Legislature be made a Minister?

Answer: A non-member of Legislature can be made a Minister but in that case he must be elected to the Parliament within six months from the date of his appointment, otherwise he will have to resign from his post as a Minister.

Question 14: Name the three categories of the Council of Ministers.

Or

Mention the different categories of ministers in the Union Council of Ministers.

Answer: Three categories of the Council of Ministers are:
(i) Cabinet Ministers (ii) Ministers of States (iii) Deputy Ministers.

Question 15: What happens when a Motion of No-Confidence against the Council of Ministers is passed in Lok Sabha?

Answer: When a Motion of No-Confidence against the Council of Ministers is passed in Lok Sabha all the Ministers have to resign because Council of Ministers is collectively responsible to the Parliament.

Question 16: Discuss in brief about the formation of Cabinet.

Answer: The Prime Minister and 35 senior most ministers of the Government form the cabinet. The Cabinet is a collective decision-making body of the Government of India and functions from the secretariat of New Delhi.

Question 17: What is meant by the term Cabinet in a State?

Answer: Cabinet is a small and cohesive group consisting of fifteen to eighteen senior members who hold important portfolios such as defence, home affairs, finance, Parliamentary affairs, Foreign affairs, agriculture, industries, etc.

Question 18: Who gives the important portfolios?

Answer: The Cabinet Ministers give the important portfolios like defence, home affairs, finance, Parliamentary affairs, etc.

Question 19: Which body formulates the Foreign Policy of India?

Answer: The Cabinet.

Question 20: Who prepares the Annual Budget?

Answer: The Annual Budget is prepared by the Finance Minister.

Question 21: Who serves as a link between the Legislature and the Executive?

Answer: The Cabinet serves as a link between the Legislature and the Executive.

Question 22: What is Coalition Government?

Answer: If a single party fails to win an absolute majority in the Parliament, (i.e. 50% seats), then different political parties join hands & thus form a Coalition Government.

Question 23: Why the Ministers are required to take the oath of secrecy?

Answer: The Ministers are required to take the oath of secrecy before entering upon their office because it imposes a Constitutional obligation upon them not to disclose any Cabinet secret.

Question 24: What is the role of Cabinet in proclamation of emergency?

Answer: The President cannot proclaim national emergency unless the Cabinet recommends it to the President in writing that such a proclamation should be made.

Question 25: Discuss the role of Cabinet in maintaining control over appointments.

Answer: All important appointments such as those of Governors, and other appointments to the key positions must be mentioned in the Cabinet before they are made public.

Short Questions – I

Question 1: What are Cabinet Committees?

Answer: The Prime Minister functions with the help of various specialized committees such as Defence Committee, Planning Committee, etc. These are called Cabinet Committees and composed of experts and play a vital role in decision making bodies.

Question 2: Write two important functions of the Cabinet Ministers.

Answer: The two important functions of the Cabinet Ministers are:

- (i) They are the policy makers and decision makers.
- (ii) They determine India's foreign policy with other countries.

Question 3: Mention two Legislative functions of the Cabinet.

Answer: In the Parliamentary system the Cabinet has an important role in the field of Legislation. It

performs the following Legislative functions:

- (i) The Cabinet guides the Parliament for action.
- (ii) It recommends to the President, the promulgation of ordinances when Parliament is not in session.

Question 4: What are the diplomatic functions of the Cabinet?

Answer: The diplomatic functions of the Cabinet are:

- (i) The Cabinet finally approves the appointment of Ambassadors.
- (ii) It determines India's foreign policy with other countries.
- (iii) It formulates the provisions of the Treaties and Agreements with other countries.

Question 5: Mention three different ways, how loss of confidence in the Council of Ministers can be displayed by the Lok Sabha?

Answer: The loss of confidence in the Council of Ministers can be displayed:

- (i) By voting a cut in budget.
- (ii) By passing an adjournment motion.
- (iii) By passing an amendment to a bill against the wishes of the Government.

Question 6: What do you understand by Individual Responsibility?

Answer: The principle of Individual Responsibility in the Constitution implies that each Minister is responsible for his personal conduct, departmental lapses and departure from the official policy. Under the circumstances arising out of these causes, the concerned Minister has to resign.

Question 7: What is the basic principle of Collective Responsibility?

Or

What do you understand by the term 'Collective Responsibility of the Council of Ministers'?

Or

Explain the term 'Collective Responsibility'.

Answer: The principle of Collective Responsibility implies that the ministers are answerable for all decisions taken by the Cabinet. They cannot publicly criticize or show

disagreement with the Cabinet decisions. If they cannot define these decisions they have to resign or liable to dismissal.

Question 8: The Council of Ministers and the Prime Minister sink and swim together. Explain the statement.

Answer: The Council of Ministers and the Prime Minister sink and swim together as they are collectively responsible to the Lok Sabha. If a No-Confidence Motion is passed, the whole Council of Ministers has to resign or if the Prime Minister resigns, the Council of Ministers dissolved.

Short Questions – II

Question 1: Mention three important functions of the Prime Minister.

Answer: (i) The Prime Minister presides at the Cabinet meetings. He decides the agenda of the meetings.
(ii) The Prime Minister co-ordinates the working of various departments. He plays a special role in co-ordinating the policy of the Union.
(iii) The Constitution imposes a duty on the Prime Minister to keep the President informed regarding the affairs of the Union.

Question 2: What is the role of the Cabinet secretariat?

Answer: The Cabinet has a secretariat with a Secretary General as its head. It plays an important co-ordination role in the decision making at the highest level. It operates under the supervision and direction of the Prime Minister. It prepares the agenda of the Cabinet meeting, prepares minutes of the meeting, and arranges follow-up action for the implementation of the decision taken in the meeting.

Question 3: Mention the administrative functions of Cabinet.

Answer: Administrative functions of Cabinet:

(i) The Cabinet formulates both external and domestic policies of the Government such as defence, economic policies, security needs, President's Rule in State, formation of new States, industrial policy and imports.
(ii) Once the policy is made by the Cabinet, the Ministers concerned carry it out either by administrative action or by drafting a Bill and piloting it through the Legislature.
(iii) It co-ordinates the working of various departments for the smooth implementation of policy.

Question 4: Discuss the role of cabinet in financial matters.

Answer: Control of Finance:

(i) The Cabinet is responsible for the expenditure of the government, for presenting the demand for grants and also for raising necessary income by various means including taxation.

- (ii) The Finance Minister after thorough discussion and with the co-operation of other Ministers, prepares the budget for the coming financial year.
- (iii) It is the responsibility of the Finance Minister to present the budget in its final shape before the Lok Sabha.

Question 5: What is the difference between the Council of Ministers and the Cabinet in the Central Executive?

Answer: (i) The Council of Ministers consists of all categories of Ministers. On the other hand the cabinet is a smaller group consisting of some 25 senior Ministers.

(ii) In the day to day working of the Government the Council of Ministers as a whole rarely meets. The Cabinet on the other hand meet as frequently as possible.

(iii) The Council of Ministers as a whole rarely meets, it is the Cabinet Ministers who are consulted by the Prime Minister for information and advice which he needs. The Cabinet is an inner body within the Council of Ministers and exercises all powers on its behalf.

Long Questions

Question 1: Mention the various categories of Ministers.

Answer: There are three categories of Ministers:

(i) Cabinet Ministers: They are the senior and experienced Ministers, usually influential leaders as well. Each Cabinet Minister is in charge of one or more Government Ministries or Departments for example, Finance, Foreign Affairs, Home, Education, etc.

(ii) Ministers of State: They are generally junior colleagues of the Cabinet Ministers and are mostly fresh entrants still learning the art of governance. However, experienced and influential leaders are also appointed as Ministers of State. They also answer questions in the Parliament on behalf of the Minister or on their own behalf.

(iii) Deputy Ministers: They are junior-most Ministers and are attached to such ministries where the work load is very heavy. They assist the Senior Ministers in charge of particular department. They answer the questions in the Parliament on behalf of the Ministers.

Question 2: Discuss the salient features of Cabinet system.

Answer: Some of the significant features of the Cabinet system in India are as follows:

(i) Exclusion of the President: Though all the executive actions are taken in the name of the President, yet the real power and responsibility in this regard is that of the council of Ministers.

(ii) Leadership of the Prime Minister: Prime Minister is the leader of the Cabinet and the

whole Council of Ministers. He picks-up the members of the Council of Ministers and distributes portfolios among them. The Prime Minister conducts the meetings and presiding of the Cabinet and presides over such meetings. The moment the Prime Minister resigns on political grounds the whole Council of Ministers is automatically dissolved.

(iii) Unity or Solidarity of the Cabinet: Since the whole Council of Ministers usually belong to one political party and has same objectives and ideals before it and their

common leader is Prime Minister, they have to act as their single unit. At the meeting of the Cabinet the ministers express their views freely and may disagree with the majority.

(iv) Collective Responsibility: The Council of Ministers is a team and the Prime Minister is its captain. The principle of collective responsibility also implies that the Ministers are answerable for all decisions taken by the Cabinet. They cannot publicly criticize or show disagreement with the Cabinet decisions. If they cannot defend these decisions they have to resign or are liable to dismissal.

(v) Individual Responsibility: There is no provision in the Constitution for the individual responsibility of the Ministers. However, it is equally important. The principle of individual responsibility implies that each Minister is responsible for his personal conduct, departmental lapses and departure from the official policy. Under the circumstances arising out of these reasons, the Minister concerned, has to resign.

Question 3: What are the Legislative functions performed by the Cabinet?

Answer: The Cabinet plays a pivotal role in the Government. It has a wide range of powers and shoulder responsibilities covering executive, legislative and financial field.

Legislative Functions: In the Parliamentary system the Cabinet has an important role in the field of legislation. It is regarded as an instrument which links executive wing of Government to the legislative. It performs the following legislative functions:

- (i) The Cabinet guides the Parliament for action.
- (ii) It prepares the legislative programme of the Parliament.
- (iii) It prepares the drafts of Bills and initiates them in the Parliament.
- (iv) It fixes dates for holding the sessions of Parliament.
- (v) It recommends to the President the promulgation of ordinances when Parliament is not in session.
- (vi) It can move Constitutional Amendments.
- (vii) It decides the dissolution of the Parliament.