

## THE PRIME MINISTER

The title Prime Minister has been derived from the French word “Premier Ministre” who served the king in administration. Later the term was adopted by the English People and the authority of the Prime Minister was fully established in the late 19th century. Since we adopted the West Minister model, the office of the Prime Minister is the embodiment of highest political power. To Lord Morley “Prime Minister is the keystone of the Cabinet Arch”. So if the Prime Minister happens to be a man of powerful personality, backed by a stable majority in Parliament, he would be far more powerful than a most despotic monarch.

- **Appointment**

Article 75 provided that the Prime Minister shall be appointed by the President. Accordingly the President after a general election invites the leader of the majority party or the leader of the coalition of parties who commands a majority in the Lok Sabha to form the Government.

- **Qualification**

He shall be qualified to get elected to the Lok Sabha.

- **Term of Office**

The term of the Prime Minister is not fixed. Once appointed he continues till he is assured of the support of majority in the Lok Sabha. If he loses the support/confidence he resigns.

### **Powers and Functions of the Prime Minister**

1. Formation of the Council of Minister:- The first task of the Prime Minister is to draw up a list of other ministers. He has a free hand and Lord Attlee maintained that "The Prime Minister should make decisions solely and should be ruthless in making appointments and sacking those who should be relieved". To Disraeli, "a work of great time, great labour and great responsibility". However, the Prime Minister has certain considerations in selecting his colleagues. He must include all important leaders of the party; must give representation to all regions, states, union territories, representation to all shades of opinion and interest in the party, communities, religions, and section of societies, young blood, people with steady loyalty to him, should give due weightage to experience, balance between the two Houses etc.

2. Allocation of Port Folio:- Another important task of the Prime Minister is the allocation of Portfolios among the colleagues. For this he keeps in mind the experience, ability and interest of the persons concerned. In this case also he may be put in pressure by the colleagues and has to tackle diplomatically.

3. Re-shuffle the cabinet:- the power of reshuffling the cabinet reveals the real powers of the Prime Minister. Nehru did it whenever he pleased but Mrs. Gandhi did it more often. Rajiv Gandhi is also not an exception to this. The Prime Minister has the unfettered right to review, from time to time, the allocation of offices among the various ministries and to decide whether that allocation still remained the best that could be effected.

4. Head of the Government:- the Prime Minister is the pivot of the whole system of administration and the head of what Bagehot termed as the efficient part of the Executive. As such he keeps an

eye on all departments and coordinates their working. He guides, instructs, encourages, advice, and warns his ministerial colleagues.

5. Presides over the meetings of the Council of Ministers:- the Prime Minister presides over the cabinet meetings and controls the agenda. The agenda of the cabinet meetings will be prepared by the cabinet secretariat in consultation with the Prime Minister's office.

6. Link between the President and the Council of Minister's:- It is the constitutional responsibility of the Prime Minister to keep the President informed about all the decisions of the Council of Ministers, to furnish information about all the administrative affairs and legislative proposals of the Union Government. Further if the President requires, to submit for the consideration of the Council of Ministers any matter on which a decisions had been taken by the Minister, but which had not been considered by the Council of Ministers.

7. Role in Parliament:- the Prime Minister has a decisive role in determining as to when Parliament shall be summoned, prorogued and dissolved. It is under the Prime Minister's guidance that the time table of each session is worked out and new bills are drafted and moved in parliament. As the leader of the house, the Prime Minister makes all the key announcements, defends govt. policies answers questions etc.

8. Leader of the Party:- Being the leader of the party, Prime Minister plays a very important role in formulating his party's policies, programmes and in defending them. The Prime Minister decides the party's victory at the elections. The general election is in reality the election of the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister is the chief conciliator of the diverse factions in the party. He controls

the party machine and appointments in the party cadre often depend upon his political blessings.

9. Builder of Public Opinion:- To Ivor Jennings, "The Prime Minister is not only a close student of public opinion, but also an expert in propaganda. He must know what to say, when to say, how to say and whom to say. The Prime Minister moulds and guides public opinion by receiving deputations and discusses issues, by public speeches on ceremonial occasions, news conferences, radio broadcasts, television appearances etc. He must also study the report which the party manages receives from the constituencies to know the pulse of the people.

10. International representatives:- Though the Prime Minister does not hold the ministry of External Affairs, he exercises a lot of influence on it. All authoritative announcements of the Foreign Policy of the country are made by the Prime Minister. He controls Foreign Policy and the appointment of diplomatic missions is unchallengeable. He represents the nation at critical international conferences and negotiations. He entered into correspondences with the foreign heads of governments on issues concerning world peace and security. He sent messages of good will and felicitations on national days.

11. Co-ordination of Administration:- The Prime Minister co-ordinates the administration. Apart from the overall co-ordination and supervision of the administration of the Union government, the Prime Minister exercises special responsibility towards foreign, defense, finance, home and economic affairs. In times of national and international crisis the nation looks towards him for information, guidance and even encouragement.

12. Prime Minister during Emergency:- During the operation of emergency under Article 352 of the constitution, the Prime Minister if want, can virtually became a dictator. Mrs. Indira Gandhi, during the 19thmonths of internal emergency from June 1975, assumed full dictatorial powers. The evidence of this tendency was that she did not even consult her cabinet colleagues before taking decisions and only informed them about it, the following morning. While the country had already been moving in the direction of what R.H.S Crossman had styled "Prime Ministerial form of government".

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