UNIT - 4 : THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE UNION COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

UNIT STRUCTURE

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4.1 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you will be able to

- describe the process of election and powers of the Prime minister of India
- explain the method of constituting Indian Parliament and its powers and functions

4.2 INTRODUCTION

This unit introduces you to the Central Government of India. In the previous unit you have read that Indian Constitution provides a parliamentary and federal form of government. Under a federal form of government there are two sets of governments- the central government at the centre and the state or provincial governments in the states.

In the parliamentary form of government, the Executive i.e. the government is accountable to the Legislature i.e. the Parliament in the case of India. In a parliamentary form of government there are two heads: the Head of the State and the Head of the Government. In India the Head of the State is the



Council of Ministers: It consists of the Ministers of the Government who can be of three types, namely, Cabinet Ministers, Ministers of State and Deputy Ministers.

President and the Head of the Government is the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister is assisted by his Council of Ministers. The Council of Ministers is accountable to the Parliament for its activities. Under the federal government, there are provincial or state governments apart from the Union or Central Government. In India, the states have been created mainly on the basis of the dominant language.

4.3 PRIME MINISTER AND COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

Do you have any idea who is considered the most powerful political personality in Indian politics? Is it the President or the Prime Minister? Sometimes, it may appear as a difficult question to answer. For example, when Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam was the President of India, he was so popular; many of you may say that he was the most powerful political personality.

This is true to some extent. However, as far as running the Government is concerned, it is the Prime Minister who is the most powerful political person in Indian politics. It is also for the reason that the Indian constitution provides for a parliamentary form of Government. In the parliamentary form of government, the Council of Ministers headed by the Prime Minister exercised the real powers of the Government.

The Prime Minister of India is the real head of the Government. The Prime Minister chairs the Union Cabinet and it is the Union Cabinet who takes all important executive decisions of the Indian Government. The Prime Minister also represents the country in all important international forums of Heads of Governments including the forums of the UNO. The Prime Minister briefs the President on all political developments and policy issues.



LET US KNOW

The Prime Minister and his Council of Ministers exercise all the executive powers vested in the President of India according to the

Article 74 of the Indian Constitution. The number of members of the Council of Ministers is not specified in the constitution. So it is determined according to the situation.

The President appoints the Council of Ministers on the advice of the Prime Minister. The portfolios are also distributed on the advice of the Prime Minister. Both in appointing the Council of Ministers as well as in distributing the portfolios the Prime Minister enjoys his discretion.

Of late, there has been an important change in Indian politics. Since 1989 no single political party has secured absolute majority in the Parliament. So, there has emerged a new trend called coalition politics. In coalition politics, the Prime Minister has to act under constraint. For example, the Prime Minister cannot even decide his/her Council of Ministers, nor can he/she decide the portfolios. He/she does it on the advice of the coalition partners.

The Council of Ministers has three ranks of Ministers- Cabinet Ministers, State Ministers and Deputy Ministers. It is the cabinet ministers who exercise the real powers in running the government and take all important policy decisions.

The personality, leadership quality and charisma of the Prime Minister play an important role in Indian politics. Even India's role in international politics is also determined by the statesmanship of the Prime Minister.



ACTIVITY 4.1

Mention the names of three Cabinet Ministers of the central government at the present time.

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CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q 1. The Prime Minister is appointed by

a). Union Council of Ministers b). The Vice - President

b). The Speaker of the Lok Sabha d). The President

Q 2. The Union Cabinet is chaired by

a). The President b). The Speaker

c). The Prime Minister d). The Home Minster

Q 3. The President is the leader of the Union Council of Ministers. (True/ False)

Q 4. The Council of Ministers consists of

a). The Cabinet Ministers b). The Ministers of State

c). Deputy Ministers d). All the above

Q 5. Who is the Real Head of the Government of India?

4.4 PARLIAMENT- ITS COMPOSITION, POWERS AND FUNCTIONS

Do you have a voting right? Or have you seen election campaigns? You probably know that when the elections are held the voters either elect their MP or MLA. The full form of 'MP' is 'Member of Parliament'. MLA stands for Member of Legislative Assembly. The voters also elect the Panchayat members.

Indian Parliament is located in Delhi and hence MPs are sent to Delhi and MLAs are sent to the capital of the states. In the case of Assam, the capital is Dispur.

The Indian Parliament has two chambers. One chamber is known as 'Lok Sabha' (House of People) and the other is known as 'Rajya Sabha' (Council of States). The voters directly elect the members of the Lok Sabha. The members of the Rajya Sabha are elected by the MLAs of the state. At

present the Lok Sabha has a total Strenght of 545 members. Of these, two members from the Anglo-Indian Community are nominated to the House by the President of India. The number has not changed since 1971. The Rajya Sabha is comprised of 250 members, of whom 12 members are nominated to the House by the President of India for their services to the nation.

Now, do you have any idea what functions the Parliament forms?

Powers and Functions of the Parliament

Now, do you have any idea what functions the Parliament forms? We often say that all should obey the laws of the country. But who makes these laws? The Indian Parliament makes the laws applicable for the entire country. Again, you must have heard about the Budget. The Budget is the annual financial statement for the country and the states. The Budget for the whole of India is presented in the Parliament. It is discussed and passed by the Parliament. Without the budget the administration cannot run.

Most important power of the Parliament is to control the Government. This power is exercised by Lok Sabha.



LET US KNOW

In the first hour of each sitting of the Parliament, various parliamentary questions are raised. This time is known as the zero hour.

You must have heard the term 'Mid-Term Poll'. The opposition parties both in the Parliament and also in the State Assemblies keep on telling that the government will fall. How? In case of Union Government, the party or the alliance in power has to enjoy the support of more than 50% of its members present in Lok Sabha. When it fails to secure that support the government falls. This is proved in various ways. Have you heard a term called "No Confidence Motion"? The opposition parties move this motion against the government. If the Lok Sabha passes it, the Government falls.

Do you know of any Government, which fell due to the failure to secure



Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India

majority in the Lok Sabha? Since 1996 many governments at the center had to leave office due to their inability to secure majority in Lok Sabha. For example, the BJP Government led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee fell after 11 days in power in 1996. The next two governments led by H. D. Deve Gowda and I. K. Gujral also fell for the same reason. The next government, again led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee also fell after 11 months in power for the same reason.



ACTIVITY 4.2

Name the political parties which make an alliance to form the government at the center at the present time?

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ACTIVITY 4.3

Write the names of the MLA and the MP of your constituency.

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Coalition :
A government formed by two or more political parties.



ACTIVITY 4.4

How many MPs are elected from Assam to the Lok Sabha?

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The Council of Ministers is directly accountable to the lower house of the

Parliament i.e. Lok Sabha. This accountability is manifested in the following ways:

- The Government is formed from within the Party/Alliance which enjoys majority in the Lok Sabha
- The Government introduces all bills in the Parliament without the approval of the Parliament no Bill can become Act.
- The Government continues in office till it enjoys the confidence of the Lok Sabha
- The Government is bound to place before the Parliament all important decisions/developments in national and international politics.
- Parliamentary committees control the works of various ministries.

Parliament also takes part in electing the President and the Vice-President and also in their removal.

These days the sessions of the parliament are directly telecast by Television. Therefore, now we can see the members of the Parliament debating on various issues. You must have heard or noticed that the Parliament sometimes become very stormy. The opposition demands the resignation of the Government for its failure to solve different problems of the country. The Speaker adjourns the houses. Sometime we may regard them as very unhealthy. But, there is a positive side to it. Such open debates help in upholding the democratic tradition by allowing all the representatives to express their views on different issues. Of course, sometimes the debates are not very constructive and the behaviour of the members becomes unruly also.



ACTIVITY 4.5

Watch the debates of the Parliament (Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha) on the Television.



Parliament of India



LET US KNOW

The President of India is an integral part of the Parliament, but he does not belong to any of the two houses. The President addresses the joint sessions of the Parliament.



Mid Term Poll *:* Election held in the middle of the period of a government or before completing the term of a government.



CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Q. 6. Write the names of the two chambers of Indian Parliament.

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Q. 7. Who elects the members of the Rajya Sabha?

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Q. 8. The number of members in the Lok Sabha is

a) 545 b) 543 c) 453 d) 250

Q. 9. Write two important functions of the Parliament.

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4.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit you have read about the central and the state governments in India. From this unit you have come to know about the election procedure of the President and the Vice-President and their Powers, Powers and Functions of the Prime Minister and his role in the Council of Ministers. You have also learnt that in Indian parliamentary government the President is the nominal head and the Council of ministers headed by the Prime Minister is the real head of the government. The Indian Parliament has two chambers: the Lok Sabha or the House of the People and the Rajya Sabha or the Council of the States.

After reading this unit you have also learnt about the role of the Governor, the powers and functions of the Chief Minister and his Council of Ministers and also about the significance of Panchayatiraj Institutions in India. From this unit you have also learnt that in a state the Governor is a nominal head while the Chief Minister and his Council of Ministers constitute the real head. The 73rd Amendment to the Constitution gives constitutional status to the Panchayatiraj Institutions in India and Panchayatiraj Institutions provide the opportunity to the common people to directly take part in the governance of the country at the local level.



4.6 FURTHER READINGS

1. SHARMA, B.K. (2015). Introduction to the Constitution of India (8th ed.). New Delhi, Delhi : PHI Learning PVT.



4.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Ans to Q No 1: The President

Ans to Q No 2: The Prime-Minister

Ans to Q No 3: False

Ans to Q No 4: All the above

Ans to Q No 5: The Prime Minister and the Council of Ministers

Ans to Q No 6: Rajya Sabha (Council of States) and Lok Sabha (House of People)

Ans to Q No 7: The members of the Rajya Sabha are elected by the MLAs of the State

Ans to Q No 8: 545

Ans to Q No 9: Making laws and controlling the government

Opposition :
the representatives of different parties who do not form the government

Speaker :
The person who controls the discussions in the Parliament

4.8 MODEL QUESTIONS

A. Very Short Question

Q.1. What is “No confidence Motion”?

B. Short Questions (answars within 150 words) :

Q.1. Write shour note on confidence Montion?

C. Long Questions (answar each witin 300-500 words) :

Q.1. “Governor is the constitutional head of a state”- enumerate.

Q.2. What do you mean by Panchayatiraj?

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