

PM Rejigs Cabinet Panels

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Just days after expanding his Union Cabinet, PM Modi rejigged his cabinet committees. The Prime Minister also sharpened up the CCEA (Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs) by trimming it and further reconstituted the CCPA (Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs) by bringing fresh faces. So, knowledge about these committees is essential for every UPSC aspirant.

In news: PM rejigs Cabinet panels

Placing it in syllabus: Governance

Dimensions

- What are Cabinet Committees?
- Constitutional Provisions
- Important Cabinet Committees and their Functions
- Cabinet Committees and Parliamentary Committees : A Comparison

Content:

What are Cabinet Committees?

- Cabinet Committees are an executive arm of the government assigned with the task of conducting the business of it.
- They are an organizational device to lessen the enormous workload of the Cabinet.
- There are eight cabinet committees that act as the final decision-making body on important political, economic, security and investment matters.

Composition:

- Their membership varies from 3 to 8.
- The Prime Minister sets up different cabinet committees with selected members of the Cabinet and assigns

specific functions to these committees.

- They usually include only Cabinet Ministers. However, non-cabinet ministers can also be included as members.
- Apart from the ministers in charge of the subjects covered, other senior ministers can also be included as members. Usually, each cabinet committee has at least one Cabinet Minister.
- The members of the Cabinet Committee can be from both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha.
- Such Committees are usually chaired by the PM. At times, other Cabinet ministers like Home, Finance, etc. can also be the chairperson.
- But, if the Prime Minister is a member of the committee, then, he or she is the head of the committee.

Functions and Powers:

- Cabinet Committees facilitate an in-depth examination of policy issues and effective coordination.
- They are based on the principles of division of labor and effective delegation.
- They not only resolve issues and frame proposals for the Cabinet's consideration, but they also take decisions. The Cabinet can, of course, review their decisions.

Types of Cabinet Committees:

Standing Cabinet Committee: These are **permanent in nature** with a specific job. The Cabinet Ministers are called 'members' while the people without the rank of Cabinet Committee are called 'special invitees'.

Ad-hoc Cabinet Committee: These are temporary in nature. They are formed from time to time to deal with specific tasks.

Constitutional Provisions:

- Cabinet Committees are extra-constitutional in

emergence, which means, they are not mentioned in the Indian Constitution. But, the Rules of Business provide for their formation.

- The **Transaction of Business Rules (TBR), 1961** provide for their establishment.
- These Rules emerge from **Article 77(3)** of the Constitution, which states: "The President shall make rules for the more convenient transaction of the business of the Government of India, and for the allocation among Ministers of the said business."

Important Cabinet Committees and their Functions:

Appointments Committee of the Cabinet:

- The committee is headed by the Prime Minister.
- The Minister of Home Affairs and Minister in-charge of the concerned Ministry are the members of this committee.

The important functions of the committee are:

- To take decisions regarding all higher level appointments in the Cabinet Secretariat, public enterprises, banks and financial institutions.
- To decide all cases of disagreement relating to appointments between the Department or Ministry concerned and the Union Public Service Commission.
- To consider and decide representations, appeals and memorials from officers of the rank or pay equivalent to or higher than a Joint Secretary in the Central Government.

Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA)

- The Prime Minister is the head of this committee.
- Cabinet ministers of various ministries are its members.

Its important functions are:

- To direct and coordinate governmental activities in the economic sphere.
- To review economic trends and evolve a consistent and integrated policy framework in the country.
- To review progress of activities related to rural development including those concerning small and marginal farmers
- To deal with industrial licensing cases involving proposals from the Ministries for the establishment of Joint Sector Undertakings
- To consider issues relating to disinvestment
- To consider and decide on issues pertaining to the World Trade Organization.
- To consider issues relating to the Unique Identification Authority of India
- To monitor general prices, assess availability and export of essential and agricultural commodities and to take measures for efficient Public Distribution System

Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs

- The committee is headed by the Prime Minister. Cabinet ministers of various ministries are its members.

Its important functions are:

- To deal with problems relating to Centre-State relations
- To consider economic and political issues which have to be judged with a wider perspective
- To deal with policy matters concerning foreign affairs which do not have external or internal security implications

Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs

- This committee is composed of cabinet ministers from various ministers.

- The Union **Home Minister is the head of the committee.**

The functions of the committee are:

- To watch the progress of Government business in Parliament and to give directions necessary to secure smooth and efficient conduct of such business
- To scrutinize and to consider the attitude of the government on non-official bills and resolutions to be presented to Parliament
- To review legislations undertaken by State Legislatures from an all-India point of view
- To consider proposals to summon or discontinue the Houses of Parliament

Cabinet Committee on Security

- The Prime Minister is the head of this committee.
- Cabinet ministers of Finance, Defense, Home Affairs and External Affairs are its members.

The important functions of the committee are:

- To deal with all Defence related issues
- To deal with issues relating to law and order, and internal security
- To deal with policy matters concerning foreign affairs on security related issues
- To deal with economic and political issues impinging on national security
- To review the manpower requirements relating to national security
- To consider all matters relating to atomic energy

Cabinet Committee on Investments and Growth

- The committee is headed by the Prime Minister with various cabinet ministers as its members.

The functions of the committee are as follows:

- To consider and take decisions in respect of all infrastructure related proposals costing more than rupees three hundred crores
- To consider and decide measures to facilitate private sector investment in specific projects
- To lay down annual parameters and targets for performance and review the progress of infrastructural projects
- To consider cases of increase in the firmed up cost estimates/revised cost estimates due to various reasons

Cabinet Committee on Accommodation

The committee is composed of cabinet ministers from various ministries with one of them as the head.

The important functions of the committee are:

- To determine the guidelines or rules and terms and conditions to govern out-of-turn allotment of government accommodation and allotment of accommodation to the members of the parliament
- To decide upon the allotment of government accommodation to various categories of non-eligible persons and organizations and the rate of rent to be charged from them
- to consider proposals regarding shifting of the existing Central Government Offices to places outside Delhi and the location of new offices in Delhi.

Cabinet Committees and Parliamentary Committees : A Comparison

Nature of Committees:

- ***Cabinet Committees*** are **arm of the executive** which helps the Government of the day to carry out its work in a

more efficient and responsible manner.

- **Parliamentary Committees** are **an arm of the legislature**. The Parliament is assisted by a number of committees to help discharge its duties due to paucity of time as well as lack of expertise.

Functions:

- **Cabinet committees** reduce the pressure of work upon the **cabinet**.
- They not only sort out issues and formulate proposals for the consideration of the cabinet but also take decisions. However, the cabinet can review their decisions.
- **Parliamentary Committees** are established to study and deal with numerous matters which cannot be handled by the law making body due to their sheer volume as well as lack of expertise in such areas.
- These Committees can also monitor the working of the Executive organ of the Government as well as review proposed laws.

Constitutional Status:

- **Cabinet Committees** are **extra-constitutional** in emergence. In other words, they are not mentioned in the Constitution. However, the Rules of Business provide for their establishment.
- The Constitution of India makes a mention of **Parliamentary committees** at different places, but without making any specific provisions regarding their composition, tenure, functions, etc. All these matters are dealt with by the rules of two Houses.

Appointment:

- Cabinet committees are set up by the Prime Minister. The PM also selects members of the Cabinet and assigns specific functions to these committees.

- **Parliamentary committees** are appointed or elected by the House or nominated by the Speaker / Chairman and works under his/her direction. They present their report to the House or to the Speaker /Chairman

Composition:

- **Cabinet committees'** membership varies from 3 to 8 and are composed of only ministers of the government. These committees are generally presided over by the Prime Minister, if he is the head of such a committee or by the Cabinet Minister.
- **Parliamentary Committees** mostly have members who are nominated / elected by the Parliament every year from amongst its members

Mould your thought: What are Cabinet Committees? How are they different from Parliamentary Committees?

Approach to the answer:

- Introduction
- Define Cabinet Committees
- Briefly Discuss their composition, powers and functions
- Discuss difference between the Cabinet Committee and Parliamentary committee
- Conclusion