

Always in doubt about chapter's topic

## 21 Cabinet Committees

### FEATURES OF CABINET COMMITTEES

*The following are the features of Cabinet Committees:*

1. They are **extra-constitutional** in emergence. In other words, they are not mentioned in the Constitution. However, the Rules of Business provide for their establishment. *#imp.*
2. They are of **two types—standing and ad hoc**. The former are of a permanent nature while the latter are of a temporary nature. The *ad hoc* committees are constituted from time to time to deal with special problems. They are disbanded after their task is completed. <sup>1</sup> *#*
3. They are **set up by the Prime Minister** according to the exigencies of the time and requirements of the situation. Hence, their number, nomenclature, and composition varies from time to time.
4. Their **membership varies from (three to eight)**. They usually include only Cabinet Ministers. However, the **non-cabinet Ministers are not debarred** from their membership.
5. They not only include the Ministers in charge of subjects covered by them but also include other senior Ministers.
6. They are **mostly headed by the Prime Minister**. Some times other Cabinet Ministers, particularly the Home Minister or the Finance Minister, also acts as their Chairman. But, in case the Prime Minister is a member of a committee, he invariably **presides over it**. *#*
7. 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.
8. They are an organisational device to reduce the enormous workload of the Cabinet. They also facilitate in-depth examination of policy issues and effective coordination. They

are based on the principles of division of labour and effective delegation.

## LIST OF CABINET COMMITTEES

*In 1994, there were the following 13 Cabinet Committees:*

1. Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs
2. Cabinet Committee on Natural Calamities
3. Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs
4. Appointments Committee of the Cabinet
5. Cabinet Committee on Accommodation
6. Cabinet Committee on Foreign Investment
7. Cabinet Committee on Drug Abuse Control
8. Cabinet Committee on Prices
9. Cabinet Committee on Minority Welfare
10. Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs
11. Cabinet Committee on Trade and Investment
12. Cabinet Committee on Expenditure
13. Cabinet Committee on Infrastructure

*In 2013, the following 10 Cabinet Committees were in existence:*

1. Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs
2. Cabinet Committee on Prices
3. Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs
4. Appointments Committee of the Cabinet
5. Cabinet Committee on Security
6. Cabinet Committee on World Trade Organisation (WTO) Matters
7. Cabinet Committee on Investment
8. Cabinet Committee on Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) related issues
9. Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs
10. Cabinet Committee on Accommodation

*At present (2019), the following 8 Cabinet Committees are functional:*

1. Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs ✓
2. Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs ✓
3. Appointments Committee of the Cabinet ✓
4. Cabinet Committee on Security ✓
5. Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs ✓
6. Cabinet Committee on Accommodation ✓

7. Cabinet Committee on Investment and Growth ✓
8. Cabinet Committee on Employment and Skill Development ✓

## FUNCTIONS OF CABINET COMMITTEES

The following four are the more important cabinet committees: PEAP

- P.M. Head {
1. The **Political Affairs Committee** deals with all policy matters pertaining to domestic and foreign affairs.
  2. The **Economic Affairs Committee** directs and coordinates the governmental activities in the economic sphere.
  3. **Appointments Committee** decides all higher level appointments in the Central Secretariat, Public Enterprises, Banks and Financial Institutions.
  4. **Parliamentary Affairs Committee** looks after the progress of government business in the Parliament.
- HM Head: [

The first three committees are chaired by the Prime Minister and the last one by the Home Minister. Of all the Cabinet Committees, the most powerful is the Political Affairs Committee, often described as a "Super-Cabinet". #imp.

## GROUPS OF MINISTERS

In addition to cabinet committees, several Groups of Ministers (GoMs) are constituted to look into different issues / subjects. Some of these GoMs are empowered to take decisions on behalf of the Cabinet whereas the others make recommendations to the Cabinet.<sup>2</sup>

# The institution of GoMs has become a viable and effective instrument of coordination among the ministries. These **are ad hoc bodies** formed to give recommendations to the cabinet on certain emergent issues and critical problem areas. Ministers heading the concerned ministries are inducted into the relevant GoMs and when the advice is crystallised they are disbanded.<sup>3</sup>

*The Second Administrative Reforms Commission (2005–2009) made the following observations and recommendations with respect to the working of the GoMs<sup>4</sup> :*

1. The Commission observed that the constitution of a large number of GoMs has resulted in many GoMs not being able to meet regularly to complete their work thus leading to significant delays on many major issues.
2. The Commission felt that more **selective use of the institution of GoMs would perhaps lead to more effective coordination** particularly if they are empowered to arrive at a decision on behalf of the Cabinet with time limits that are prescribed for completing the work entrusted to them.
3. The Commission recommended that there is need to ensure that the existing coordination mechanism of GoMs function effectively and helps in early resolution of issues. Selective, but effective use of GoMs with clear mandate and prescribed time limits would be helpful.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. For example, the Emergency Committee was set-up in 1962 after the Chinese invasion.

2. Second Administrative Reforms Commission, Government of India, Report on Organizational Structure of Government of India, 2009, P.136. This commission was headed by Veerappa Moily, a senior Congress leader and former Karnataka Chief Minister.
3. Ramesh K. Arora and Rajni Goyal, *Indian Public Administration*, New Age International Publishers, Third Edition, 2013, pp. 238–239.
4. Second Administrative Reforms Commission, Government of India, Report on Organisational Structure of Government of India, 2009, pp. 136–137 and 140.