

Cabinet Mission 1946 - NCERT Notes for UPSC Modern Indian History

Cabinet Mission was a high-powered mission sent in February 1926 to India by the Atlee Government (British Prime Minister.) The mission had three British cabinet members – Pethick Lawrence, Stafford Cripps, & and A.V. Alexander. The Cabinet Mission's aim was to discuss the transfer of power from British to Indian leadership.

Important for [IAS Exam](#), aspirants should read Cabinet Mission from prelims and mains perspectives. This article will provide NCERT Notes on relevant information on the topic introducing what cabinet mission was and how did it fail after Congress' denied abiding by its guidelines.

What was Cabinet Mission & Who were its members?

Clement Atlee (British Prime Minister) decided to send a mission to India for the transfer of powers from the British Indian government to Indian leaders.

The mission had three members mentioned with their posts in the table below:

Cabinet Mission Members	Cabinet Mission Members – Designation
Pethick Lawrence	Secretary of State for India
Stafford Cripps	President of the Board of Trade
A.V. Alexander	First Lord of Admiralty

You should know that **Lord Wavell was not a member** of the Cabinet Mission but was involved.

Objectives of Cabinet Mission

- To obtain an agreement with the Indian leaders as to the framing of a constitution for India.
- To formulate a constitution-making body (the Constituent Assembly of India).
- To establish an Executive Council with the support of the major Indian parties.

Why did the Cabinet Mission fail?

The main reasons for the failure of the Cabinet Mission are given below:

- The Congress Party wanted a strong centre with minimum powers for the provinces.

- The Muslim League wanted strong political safeguards for the Muslims like parity in the legislatures.
- Since both parties had many ideological differences and could not find common ground, the mission came up with its own set of proposals in May 1946.
- The Dominion of India would be granted independence, without any partition.
- The provinces would be divided into three groups/sections:
 1. Group A: Madras, Central Provinces, UP, Bihar, Bombay and Orissa
 2. Group B: Punjab, Sindh, NWFP and Baluchistan
 3. Group C: Bengal and Assam
- The Muslim-majority provinces were grouped into two groups and the remaining Hindu-majority in one of the groups.
- The central government at Delhi would have powers over the defence, foreign affairs, communications and currency. The rest of the powers would be vested with the provinces.
- A constituent assembly would be set up for writing a new constitution for the country. An interim government would be established until a new government was formed on the basis of the constitution written by the constituent assembly.
- The Congress was not keen on the idea of the groupings of provinces on the basis of Hindu-Muslim majority and vying for control at the centre. It was also against the idea of a weak centre. The Muslim League did not want any changes to the proposals.
- Since the plan was not accepted, a new plan was proposed by the mission in June 1946. This plan proposed the division of India into a Hindu-majority India and a Muslim-majority India later to be renamed Pakistan. A list of princely states was also made that could either join the union or remain independent.
- The Congress Party under Jawaharlal Nehru did not accept the second plan. Instead, it agreed to be part of the constituent assembly.
- The Viceroy invited 14 men to form the interim government. There were 5 from the Congress, 5 from the League, 1 member each representing the Sikh, Parsee, Indian Christian and scheduled caste communities.
- Both the League and the Congress were given the right to nominate 5 members to the Viceroy's interim council. The Congress nominated Zakir Hussain as one of the members to which the League objected saying only it represented Indian Muslims and no other party. The Muslim League did not take part in it.
- The Congress leaders entered the viceroy's interim council and thus Nehru headed the interim government. The new government began the task of framing a constitution for the country.
- Congress-led governments were formed in most provinces including the NWFP. In Bengal and Sind, the League formed the governments.
- Jinnah and the League objected to the new central government. He geared to agitate for Pakistan and urged Muslims to demand Pakistan by any means. He called for 'Direct Action Day' on 16 August 1946.
- This call led to widespread communal rioting in the country with 5000 people being killed on the first day in Calcutta. Communal riots spread to many other areas notably Noakhali and Bihar.

- There was a call for the partitioning of the country on account of the riots. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was one of the first Congress leaders to acknowledge the inevitability of the partition as a means to stop the brutal violence.

The topic, 'Cabinet Mission' is an important w.r.t. Modern Indian History for [UPSC 2020](#) and should be read for relevant details. Questions have been previously asked in the UPSC Prelims and candidates should practice previous year question papers after reading this topic.