

1. Is it appropriate to say that cabinet is the prime mover of political action and the Core of Indian political system? What are the factors that have led to erosion of power and authority of cabinet in recent years?

Answer:

The cabinet is a committee of the leading members of the government. It comprises usually 20-23 members. Within the cabinet there is a pecking order, with the posts of finance, foreign minister, home minister and, if appointed, deputy PM being regarded as the 'plum' jobs. This may also mean that such ministers form an inner circle of ministers who are consulted more frequently by the PM, sometimes in the form of a core group.

The cabinet is indeed at the core of the Indian political system. Particularly in a system like ours when the political executive is drawn from the legislature, it becomes even more important. In fact almost all the policy decisions are taken in meetings of cabinet and only then they are either presented before the parliament for legislations or are directly implemented through an executive order. Further as the executive is drawn out of the party which holds the majority in the legislature, the possibility of any cabinet proposal being rejected by the Parliament is very low. It is only rarely in cases like constitutional amendments etc where special majority is needed can the government may face problems sometimes, otherwise largely the cabinet which is the face of the government rules the roost.

However, things have changed to a certain extent in the recent past, due to the advent of coalition politics. Now, if no single party holds the majority in the legislature, it is dependent on some other party for its support to get its proposals through. This creates a situation when the almost absolute powers of the cabinet may get diluted. If the party is offering only outside support, it may have different ideas on same proposals and so may have reservations in supporting them in the Parliament. Secondly, due to increasing complexities of issues in the present times the importance of specialists in decision making has increased manifold. The members of the cabinet are however seasoned politicians who lack specialist skills and are therefore heavily dependent on the specialist bureaucracy and other subject matter experts in creating their opinion which come out as policy proposals. The concept of GoM and EGoM has further diluted the authority by creation of cabinets within the cabinet.

However despite some limitations, the cabinet still continues to wield considerable power and authority and is still at the helm of the Indian political system.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Answer the following Questions

1. Explain the issues that shaped the Assam Movement. In this context, also comment on the significance of the Assam Accord of 1985. (150 words)
2. Discuss the diverse processes through which nation-states and nationalism came into being in nineteenth-century Europe. (150 words)

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