



Appointment to Cabinet Committees

For Prelims: [Cabinet committees](#), [Lok Sabha Speaker](#), [Members of Parliament](#), [Prime Minister](#), [Standing committees](#)

For Mains: Challenges for [Cabinet Committees](#), Suggestions for Cabinet Committees

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Why in News?

Recently, the **Union government constituted eight [Cabinet committees](#)**, with the **[Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs \(CCEA\)](#)** getting three new faces and the **[Appointments Committee of the Cabinet \(ACC\)](#)** and **[Cabinet Committee on Security \(CCS\)](#)** remaining unchanged.

- In another development [Lok Sabha Speaker](#) has amended the **oath-taking rules** for Members of Parliament, **prohibiting them from adding any remarks** during their oath as members of the House.

What are Cabinet Committees?

- **About:**
 - A [Cabinet Committee](#) is a **subset of the [Union Cabinet](#)**, consisting of selected Union Ministers.
 - These committees are **established to streamline decision-making** by dividing responsibilities among different groups, such as those dealing with economic affairs, security, parliamentary affairs, and political affairs.
 - They provide **detailed consideration and ensure efficient handling of complex issues**, which are then presented to the full Cabinet for final approval.
 - They are based on the **principles of division of labour** and effective delegation.
- **Type:**
 - Standing (Permanent nature)
 - Ad hoc (Temporary nature to deal with special problems)
- **Features of Cabinet Committees: They are extra-constitutional in nature and the Rules of Business provide for their establishment.**
 - The executive in India works under the Government of India **Transaction of Business Rules, 1961**.
 - The rules come from **Article 77(3) of the Constitution**, which says the President makes rules for smooth government operations and assigns tasks among Ministers.
- **Membership:**
 - They are set up by the [Prime Minister](#) according to the exigencies of the time and requirements of the situation.

- Their membership varies from three to eight. They usually include only Cabinet Ministers. However, the non-cabinet Ministers are not debarred from their membership.
 - They not only include the Ministers in charge of subjects covered by them **but also include other senior Ministers.**
- In case the Prime Minister is a member of a committee, he invariably presides over it.
- 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.**
- **List of 8 Cabinet Committees:**
 - Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA)
 - Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC)
 - Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS)
 - Cabinet Committee on Accommodation
 - Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs (referred as Super-Cabinet)
 - Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs
 - Cabinet Committee on Investment and Growth
 - Cabinet Committee on Skill, Employment and Livelihood
- **Recent Changes:**
 - The Home Minister is the **sole Cabinet member** to feature on all these panels.
 - **The Prime Minister heads all six committees** except the Committee on Accommodation and the Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs.
 - No change has been made in the **Appointments Committee, which is headed by the Prime Minister** and where the Home Minister is the sole member.

Parliamentary Committees

- **Parliamentary committees** are **specialised committees** formed to handle the detailed work of the Parliament, which is **often too complex** and extensive to be conducted within the full sittings of the Houses.
- They are **essential for ensuring detailed scrutiny**, discussion, and investigation into specific matters. There are various types of parliamentary committees like **Standing Committees**, **Departmentally Related Standing Committees (DRSCs)** etc.

Groups of Ministers

- These are **ad hoc bodies formed** to give recommendations to the cabinet on **certain emergent issues and critical problem areas.**
- Some of these GoMs are **empowered to take decisions** on behalf of the Cabinet whereas the others make recommendations to the Cabinet.
 - The institution of GoMs has become a viable and effective instrument of coordination among the ministries.
- Ministers heading the concerned ministries are inducted into the relevant GoMs and when the advice is crystallised they are disbanded.

Lok Sabha Speaker Amends Oath-Taking Rules For MPs

- A new clause has been added to **'Direction 1'** within the **'Directions by the Speaker'** to manage specific matters related to the House's functioning that are not explicitly covered by existing rules.
- According to the amendment to 'Direction 1', **the new clause 3** states that a member shall take and subscribe to the oath or affirmation **without using any words** or expressions as prefixes or suffixes to the prescribed form.

What are the Challenges of the Cabinet Committees?

- **Overlapping Mandates:** It leads to **delays, inefficiency, and conflict** between committees as they fight for control. Proposals get stuck and decisions are slow.
- **Lack of Expertise:** A committee focused on healthcare policy might not have medical professionals on board. This can **lead to poorly informed decisions with unintended consequences**. Thus lack of experts can result in **long term policy ramifications**.
- **Information Silos & Poor Communication:** Committees might operate in isolation, not sharing information or collaborating. This creates blind spots and **hinders a holistic approach**. It leads to **duplication of effort, missed opportunities** for synergy, and decisions based on limited information.
- **Political Pressure & Short-termism:** Political considerations can push committees to **prioritise short-term gains** over long-term strategic planning. This can lead to **reactive measures instead of proactive solutions**.
- **Lack of Accountability & Transparency:** **The decisions made should not be** shrouded in **secrecy as it leads to erosion of trust**. Without clear information about committee activities and decisions, **the legislature can't hold them accountable**.
- **Concentration of Power:** If decision-making authority rests with only a few committees or individuals, valuable perspectives might be excluded. This can **lead to unbalanced decisions**. Important voices might not be heard, potentially **overlooking creative solutions and fostering resentment** among excluded parties.

Way Forward

- **Clear Mandate:** Clearly **define committee mandates** to avoid ambiguity. Establish a **central conflict resolution body** for inter-committee disputes.
- **Expert Appointment:** Appoint **subject matter experts** as advisors or temporary committee members. Partner with **external think tanks** for specialised knowledge.
- **Better Information Sharing:** **Implement a centralised information sharing platform for all committees. Establish regular inter-committee briefings to foster collaboration.**
- **Long-Term Goals:** Mandate committees to develop long-term strategic plans alongside short-term action items. Integrate independent economic or social impact assessments into decision-making.
- **Accountability:** Regularly release meeting minutes and summaries ensures accountability.
- **Broad-Based Consultation:** The consultation should be more broad-based. Inviting other cabinet members as special invitees.

Drishti Mains Question:

Discuss the role and significance of Cabinet Committees. Suggest measures to enhance their effectiveness in policy formulation and implementation.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Prelims:

Q. Which of the following is/are the function/functions of the Cabinet Secretariat? (2014)

1. Preparation of agenda for Cabinet Meetings
2. Secretarial assistance to Cabinet Committees
3. Allocation of Financial resources to the Ministries

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

(a) 1 only

(b) 2 and 3 only

(c) 1 and 2 only

(d) 1, 2 and 3

Ans: (c)

Mains:

Q. To what extent, in your view, the Parliament is able to ensure accountability of the executive in India? **(2021)**

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