

ROLE OF THE PRIME MINISTER IN ENGLISH POLITICAL SYSTEM:



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Introduction:

- ⦿ He is the real head of the government while monarch is the titular head of the state.
- ⦿ He is the most powerful officer of the country
- ⦿ Sir Robert Walpole was the first prime Minister of UK.
- ⦿ This Office find little expression in terms of laws and written rules.

His Appointment:

- He is appointed by the king.
- The Prime minister is the popular choice of the electorate.
- The appointment of the Prime minister must be based upon the following principles –
 1. That he must be a member of the House of Commons.
 2. That he must be leader of the majority in the House of Commons.
 3. In a hung parliament, the king has the discretion in the appointment of the prime minister.

Powers and Functions of the P.M.

1. Ministry making,
2. Distribution of Port-folios,
3. Leader of the majority party,
4. Appointment Powers,
5. Chief Policy maker,
6. General supervisor & Coordinator,
7. Link between the Crown & Ministers,
8. Emergency powers,
9. Functions in the International Sphere &
10. Provides Leadership to the Nation.

1. Ministry Making:

- ① As the head of the government the first function of the PM is to make the ministry.
- ② The PM has the sole authority to select any individual as his minister.
- ③ It is for him to decide the size of the cabinet and the ministers to include in it.
- ④ He may even select colleagues outside his party or Parliament .

2. Allocation of Portfolios:

- ⦿ He distributes the portfolios according to his discretion.
- ⦿ However, he has to keep in his mind, the ability & interest of the persons concerned.
- ⦿ The portfolio of exchequer should always given to a member of the lower house.

3. Reshuffling the Ministry:

- ⦿ He may at any time reshuffle his ministry or ask a particular minister to resign.
- ⦿ For example, in 1962, MacMillan dismissed 7 out of 20 ministers.
- ⦿ If there is any serious difference of opinion between the PM and one of his colleague, if it cannot be resolved, the PM can request the minister to resign.
- ⦿ As the keystone of the Cabinet arch, the PM can make or unmake the cabinet in any way he likes.

4. As the Chief Policy maker:

- As the chairman of the cabinet he presides over its meetings.
- As the chairman of the cabinet he decide the agenda of meetings, accepts or rejects the proposals of members for discussion.
- The ministers always consult him before taking important decisions.
- As the chairman , the PM has the casting vote, and all decisions are taken on the basis of majority vote.
- So he is the chief policy maker of his government.

5. As the general supervisor and coordinator:

- The PM is the guide to the cabinet and also the chief coordinator of the policies of his government.
- He is the manager in chief of the government business.
- The cabinet business will fail to operate if there is the absence of coordination by the PM.
- He has to see that the government acts as a single unit and do not pull in different directions.

6. As the leader of the House of Commons:

- He is the leader of the House of commons. Simultaneously he enjoys double position – the leader of the House & leader of the government.
- As the leader of the house , he decides the agenda of the house, initiates and intervenes in debates of importance in the house.
- He decides as to when the house is to be summoned and for what period.
- As the leader he guides and influences all the legislations in the house.

7. Appointment Powers:

- ① The PM is said to be the greatest dispenser of the highest offices of the country.
- ① All important appointments made by the Queen are the choice of the PM and his team.
- ① He can hire or fire promote or demote the officers under the British administration.

8. Channel of communication between the Crown and the ministers:

- He is the only channel of communication between the King and his ministers.
- The king has no official means of knowing the cabinet discussions, except what the PM may choose to tell him.
- He is also the chief advisor to monarch.
- During emergencies, the monarch will first consult the PM.
- The PM also carries the opinions of the King and discuss the various affairs of the state.

9. Leader of the Nation:

- He acts as the leader of the nation .
- As the leader of the nation he exercises great impact in molding the public opinion.
- His appearances in the mass medias and his public speeches which play an important role in shaping public opinions and to win the support of people for national causes .

10. Functions in the IN Sphere:

- ① As the leader of the nation he represent the nation in all international conferences or meetings.
- ② He plays a dominant role with the Commonwealth countries.
- ③ His role in foreign affairs makes him an important person in the nation .
- ④ He is the chief exponent of the FP of the nation.

11. Emergency powers:

- ⦿ The PM plays a very crucial role whenever the nation facing an emergency situation like that of the war or natural calamities.
- ⦿ Since the PM is the chairman of the committee of Imperial Defense, and therefore get involved fully whenever there is a war with other countries.
- ⦿ Under such situations, he may or may not consult with his cabinet colleagues before a decision has to be taken.
- ⦿ For example, the decision to make the atom bomb was taken by the PM Atlee without informing the cabinet.

Position of the P.M:

- The PM occupies a position of unmistakable supremacy in the English system of Government.
- “First among the equals.” -Lord Morley.
- “Moon among the lesser stars.” –W. Harcourt.
- “Sun around which the planet revolves.” Sir Ivor Jennings.
- “Captain of the ship of the state.” – Munro.
- “Key-stone of the cabinet arch.” – Lowell.

Position of the PM.....

- ⦿ “Pivot around which the entire governmental machinery revolves.” – H.J. Laski.
- ⦿ “Position of the Prime Minister is necessarily what the holder chooses to make of it and what other ministers allowed him to make of it.” – Dr. Herman Finer.
- ⦿ The powers and Prestige of the PM has been largely influenced by the personality of the incumbent and also conditions of the age.