

What are the Main Characteristics of Parliamentary System?

Parliamentary system has been taken from the United Kingdom because U.K. constitution is the mother constitution of parliamentarianism. It is also called ministerial or cabinet system.

Cabinet or parliamentary form of government is that in which;

- Legislature and executive are closely related and share powers with each other.
- Cabinet is formed by the parliament and parliament is the superior organ.
- There are two executives i.e. the elected president or king and the Prime Minister. President represents state and Prime Minister represents government.
- Cabinet is responsible before the legislature.

Features of Parliamentary System

Following are the features and characteristics of parliamentary system;

Formation of Cabinet

When general election is over and prime minister is elected, then prime minister nominates his council of ministers or cabinet. This responsibility of the prime minister is of prime significance. The list of ministers is presented before head of state for his approval. They are commonly taken from the party's ring leadership. Well experienced, alert and learned members are given preference because of the sensitive nature of parliamentary System.

Team Work Spirit

In parliamentary system all ministers work in a team spirit. They must agree on an issue in cabinet meeting and because of different opinion, the minister concerned must resign or he is expelled from the cabinet. All differences must be kept secret. The cabinet members are in the one boat and they either swim together or sink together.

Supremacy of Premier

In Ministerial or parliamentary system, Prime Minister is very important and has too many powers. In legislature, he is leader of the house while in executive he is leader of the council of ministers. Prime Minister is to appoint, remove, allot portfolios and supervises the activities of his ministers. He acts as a bridge between cabinet and president. On his resignation, the council of ministers must resign. Prime Minister is like a shining moon in the galaxy of stars.

Coordination of Powers

It is the basic principle of this system that two organs, legislature and executive share their powers. In this system, both the organs (legislature and executive) are dependent upon each other. In different constitutional ways, they interfere in each other affairs. For example, Maximum bills are presented in the legislature by the ministers, they can take part in legislation, address legislature, to call its meetings and even to dissolve the lower house etc. On contrary, parliament can question the activities of the cabinet members, present various motions and to remove cabinet through no confidence. Both government organs have strong check upon each other.

Political Collective Responsibility

It is another significant attribute of parliamentary system that cabinet is collectively responsible before legislature. Activities of the cabinet can be questioned and checked by legislature through various constitutional means. Ministers remain in office as long as they enjoy confidence in legislature. In case of no confidence in a single minister, the whole cabinet must resign. A bill presented by a minister must be supported by all ministers because its defeat means no-confidence in the whole cabinet. Cabinet members (ministers) are responsible before people through their elected representatives. People can present their grievances through their representatives and ministers are accountable before people,

Term

Term of cabinet is fixed by the constitution but not in rigid sense. A minister may be removed or changed any time. Parliament can be dissolved during the national emergencies. If parliament is dissolved, government no longer remains in office. Parliament, through no-confidence movement against any particular minister, Prime Minister or against the whole cabinet, can remove government. Therefore life of parliamentary government is uncertain.

Two Executives

Another characteristic of parliamentary system is, that there are two types of executive i.e. titular executive and real executive. *Titular executive* is head of the state for example the President of Pakistan. This type executive is mere a symbolic or constitutional head of state. On the other side, *real executive* is to exercise real powers of the state and is head of government for example, the Prime Minister of Pakistan.