

Prime Minister's Office [PMO] of The Central government:

PMO is a staffing agency assisting the Prime Minister in the efficient discharge of his role, functions, and responsibilities.

Evolution Of PMO:

- The Prime Minister's Secretariat was created in 1947 when India gained independence.
- The Secretariat was created for the immediate purpose of taking over the functions performed till then by the Secretary to the Governor-General, as the Prime Minister took over almost all functions which the Governor-General prior to independence, performed as the executive head of the Government.
- PMO is an extra-constitutional body that has no mention in the Indian Constitution. However, it was given the status of a department under the Government of India Allocation of Business Rules, 1961.
- Since June 1977, it is known as Prime Minister's Office and is headed by the Secretary to the Prime Minister who is now designated as the Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister.

Why Needed

- Complexity and scope of government have increased tremendously. Thus it requires a strong and technically efficient staff agency to handle the same.
- The problems of coordination between the Ministers are becoming more complex.
- Since all Ministers are entitled to have an office set-up of their own to enable them to perform their functions. PMO is the office of the Prime Minister.
- Most importantly, the PMO has two irreducible functions. Firstly, PMO is the conduit to and from the Prime Minister. Secondly, the Prime Minister depends on PMO, i.e. Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, if he wants a second opinion on any matter.

Structure of PMO:

- Politically headed by Prime Minister
- Administratively headed by Principal Secretary
- One or two additional secretaries
- 5 joint secretaries
- A number of directors/ deputy secretaries and under secretaries
- The personnel are generally drawn from the civil services and also appointed for the varying periods

PMO and its Administrative function Well, it acts as a link between the PM and his Ministers, President, Governors, Chief Ministers and also Foreign representatives.

- And, on the other side, that is the public side where it is concerned with the party matters, personal correspondences, complaints from the public, and many more.
- It helps the PM in the performance of his functions as the head of the government.

Principal functions of the PMO:

1. To deal with all references which under the rules of business have to come to the PM
2. To help the PM in the discharge of his overall responsibilities as the Chief Executive like liaison with the Union Ministries and the State govts on matters which the PM may be interested.
3. To help the PM in the discharge of his responsibilities as the Chairman of Planning Commission.
4. To deal with Public relations side of the PMO.
5. To provide PM assistance in the examination of cases submitted to him for an order under prescribed rules.

Status of PMO:

- The personality of the Principal Secretary and his relationship with the Prime Minister determines the status of PMO.
- The Prime Minister's trust in the Principal Secretary also determines the position of PMO. Further, the status of the Prime Minister within the Cabinet is also a determining factor.
- If he is weak, he will have to take all decisions in the Cabinet. In this case, the PMO will be weak and vice-versa.
- If it is a coalition Government, naturally the allies would have to be involved in the decision-making process.
- In a coalition Government, the status of PMO may be less powerful when compared to a Prime Minister who is the leader of the majority party.
- While decentralization causes havoc, centralization, too, comes at a cost. Prime Minister must pay close attention to how they manage their tendencies to centralize. They must tread that fine path on which they maintain control over their administrations and organization.

Emerging Negative Trend in the Working of PMO

- It is being said that PMO has become an over-grown, over-arching, all-powerful organization, which is a grave threat to the Parliamentary democracy and hence subverts the Constitution. These allegations have been because of the following factors:
- Most Prime Ministers have regarded the PMO as a parallel government.
- Whichever party in power and whosoever has filled the post of the Prime Minister, it has been observed that there has been a growing tendency towards centralization in decision-making. Not only does a Prime Minister sometimes keep with himself an unduly large number of portfolios but also informally exerts his real influence beyond those formally held portfolios. Thus it intrudes into the domain of individual Ministries.
- If the Prime Minister is politically unchallenged in his party, his control over other Ministries and departments, through the mechanism of monitoring, becomes very high.
- Instead of remaining within its envisaged role of providing secretarial assistance to the Prime Minister in the discharge of his functions, the PMO is increasingly having to say in the policy formulation.
- The reshuffling of Cabinet has taken place many times based on the advice of the PMO.