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ALL INDIA WHIPS' CONFERENCE

BACKGROUND

In a parliamentary form of Government, the Whips, who are drawn from various political parties, are vital links in the internal organisation of parties inside the Legislature. The expression "Whips" is derived from the term 'Whipper-in' employed by a hunt to look after the hounds and keep them together in the field. The term 'Whipper-in' was originally used in Parliament as in the hunting field for a Member who discharged this duty for his party, but, in due course of time, it became reduced to 'Whip'. In this sense the Oxford Dictionary defines a 'Whip' as a member of a particular party in Parliament whose duty is to secure the attendance of members of that party on the occasion of an important division. Later, the term was applied to the call or appeal made by such a person, and is defined by the dictionary as "the written appeal issued by a Parliament 'Whip' to summon the members of his party".

The efficient and smooth working of the parliamentary machine depends, to a very large extent, upon the office of the Whip. The Whips are responsible for carrying on, efficiently and smoothly, the organisation of the parties inside the Legislatures. The Whips have to keep a vigilant eye on the proceedings of the House and have to be ready to meet any emergency in the House.

Origin and History

In view of the important role played by the Whips in the smooth running of the parliamentary machine, an idea of providing a suitable forum for periodical meetings and mutual exchange of views amongst the Whips in Parliament as well as the State Legislatures was conceived as early as in 1952. Accordingly, the first Conference of Whips was held at Indore

on 13 September, 1952. The object of convening the conference was to establish a suitable link amongst the Whips who were concerned with the practical working of Legislatures, to discuss matters of common concern, and to evolve standards to strengthen the institutions of parliamentary democracy.

The Whips, Conference provides a useful forum to the Whips of various political parties - ruling as well as opposition, at the Centre as well as in the States - to sit together, exchange their views, thoughts and experiences, discuss difficulties confronted by them in the discharge of their parliamentary duties and evolve certain well-considered norms for efficient working of the parliamentary machine in the country. A statement showing the details of All India Whips, Conferences held so far is at **Annex XIV-A**.

THE PROCESS

The Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs organises the conference of Whips of All India Political Parties, at the Centre as well as in the States, for which a suitable venue and date are decided well in time. The Whips' Conference usually makes a number of recommendations for smooth and efficient working of Parliament and the State Legislatures in the light of the experience gained by the Whips. The Central Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs forwards the recommendations to the (i) the State Chief Ministers; (ii) Ministers in-charge of Department of Parliamentary Affairs in the State Governments; and (iii) Presiding Officers of the State Legislatures and all the invitees to the conference, for information and necessary action.

The recommendations generally fall into three categories, namely, (i) those requiring action by the Central Government; (ii) those which require action by the State Governments, and (iii) those which are to be implemented by the State Legislatures.

Accordingly, the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs requests the concerned authorities to intimate action taken by them on the recommendations concerning them. It has been observed that the State Government Legislatures have generally taken a keen interest in the implementation of recommendations. Some recommendations are implemented, some accepted in principle or implemented in spirit, if not in letter, and others are commented upon by them. The replies/comments received are consolidated in a statement and are submitted to the next conference for the information of the delegates, as Implementation

Reports from State Governments and State Legislatures. Similarly, an Implementation Report showing the action taken on the recommendations of the preceding conference by the Central Government is also provided to the succeeding conference for information.

The proceedings of a Whips' Conference together with the Implementation Reports of the Central and State Governments are printed in the form of a brochure and made available to the delegates of the next conference.

After the date for holding of the conference is decided in consultation with the hosting State Government, the Central Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs has to take, broadly speaking, the following steps:

- (a) To chalk out the programme of the conference;
- (b) To prepare items of agenda and notes thereon;
- (c) To request the State Governments/Legislatures to expedite their Implementation Reports;
- (d) To request the Chief Ministers for nominating delegates;
- (e) To write to Leaders of the Opposition in Parliament for nominating delegates;
- (f) On receipt of information on (d) and (e) above, to send invitation letters to the delegates;
- (g) To request the President, the Vice-President, the Prime Minister, the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker, the Deputy Chairman and the Chief Ministers to send messages for the conference;
- (h) To prepare Implementation Reports in respect of the recommendations of the previous conference, of (i) the Centre, (ii) State Governments and State Legislatures;
- (i) To take appropriate steps for publicity and press coverage of the conference; and
- (j) To request the Indian Airlines Corporation and the Railway Board for necessary reservations for delegates and the staff.

The 12th All India Whips' Conference, held at Srinagar on 21 & 22 August, 1997, had, *inter alia*, recommended (**Annex XIV-B**) setting up of a Monitoring Group under the Chairmanship of the Union Minister of Parliamentary Affairs to oversee the

progress of implementation of the recommendations of the 12th All India Whips' Conference.

In pursuance of the above recommendation, a Monitoring Group, to watch the progress of implementation of the recommendations made by the said conference, was constituted on 7 April, 2000 initially for a period of one year. In its first meeting held on 17 May, 2000, the Monitoring Group constituted two Sub-committees i.e. Sub-committee "A" and Sub-committee "B," on 23 May, 2000 for going to the various States to study and assess the state of implementation of the recommendations of the All India Whips' Conference. The Sub-committees were required to submit their reports within three months from the dates of their first meetings. The terms of the Monitoring Group and Sub-committees have been extended from time to time. The extended term of the Sub-committees was up to 31 January, 2004 and that of the Monitoring Group up to 16 February, 2004. Updated composition of the Monitoring Group and its two Sub-committees is at **Annexes XIV-C and D.**

Sub-committee "A" of the Monitoring Group held its meetings as under:

1. On 28.6.2000 — Himachal Pradesh at Shimla
2. On 29.6.2000 — Haryana and Punjab at Chandigarh
3. On 11.6.2001 — Uttar Pradesh at Lucknow
4. On 12.6.2001 — Delhi
5. On 13.6.2001 — Rajasthan at Jaipur
6. On 6.1.2004 — Delhi
7. On 29.1.2004 — Delhi

The meeting of Sub-committee "B" was held at Calcutta on 5 July, 2000 covering the state of West Bengal and at Delhi on 30 January, 2004.

DECISIONS

All India Whips, Conference held at Bangalore in January, 1994 made the following recommendation:

"Chief Whips of recognised Opposition parties in Parliament and the State Legislatures should be provided secretarial assistance and facilities of telephone and office accommodation

in the premises of Legislatures by giving them statutory recognition (secretarial assistance means one stenographer Grade 'B' and one peon)".

After due consideration of the matter as a whole and to implement the recommendation of the All India Whips' Conference, it was decided to provide secretarial and telephone facilities to the Leader and Chief Whip of each party which has a strength of not less than fifty Members in respect of the Lok Sabha and twenty five Members in respect of the Rajya Sabha and of each group which has a strength of not less than twenty members in respect of the Lok Sabha and fifteen Members in respect of the Rajya Sabha.

The Leaders and Chief Whips of Recognised Parties and Groups in Parliament (Facilities) Bill, 1998 was passed by the Lok Sabha on 18 December, 1998 and by the Rajya Sabha on 21 December, 1998. It was assented to by the President on 7 January, 1999.

The Leaders and Chief Whips of Recognised Parties and Groups in Parliament (Telephone and Secretarial Facilities) Rules, 1999 were framed under the Act and notified in the gazette on 5 February, 1999. These rules were laid on the Table of the Lok Sabha on 26 February, 1999 and on the Table of the Rajya Sabha on 8 March, 1999.

The Cabinet in its meeting held on 8 February, 2000 approved the proposals for amendment to the Leaders and Chief Whips of Recognised Parties and Groups in Parliament (Facilities) Act, 1998 and the rules made thereunder.

The Leaders and Chief Whips of Recognised Parties and Groups in Parliament (Facilities) Amendment Bill, 2000 was passed by both the Houses of Parliament and was assented to on 7 June, 2000 as Act No. 18 of 2000.

The Leaders and Chief Whips of Recognised Parties and Groups in Parliament (Telephone and Secretarial Facilities) Amendment Rules, 2000 were framed and were notified on 3 July, 2000.

CHECK LIST

A check list for arranging All India Whips' Conferences is at **Annex XIV-E**. Samples of Letters to be sent to the participants etc. are at **Annexes XIV-F to XIV-I**.