Role of Deputy Chief Minister

Why in news?

Recently, Ajit Pawar was sworn in as Deputy Chief Minister (CM) in Maharashtra.

What is the structure of the post of Deputy CM?

- **Constitutional provisions**- Deputy CM is a political post, and it's *not a constitutional post* like Vice President of India.
- Its origin can be traced to the post of Deputy Prime Minister which was appointed in 1947 post-independence, ***Sardar Vallabhai Patel*** is the *first Deputy PM of India.*
- This led to the development of post of Deputy CM in India.
- **Appointment and removal-** The appointment and removal of Deputy CM is entirely at the *discretion of Chief Minister.*
- Chief Minister can appoint *more than one* Deputy CM.
    - For example: Maharashtra has two Deputy CMs and Andhra Pradesh has five Deputy CMs.
- **Tenure** - There is *no fixed tenure* as Chief Minister may reshuffle the portfolio or remove a deputy CM at any point of time.

Anugrah Narayan Sinha from Bihar was the first leader to hold the post of deputy CM post-Independence. As of July, 2023, 12 states in India have the post of Deputy CM.

What are the powers of Deputy CM?

- **Rank-**Deputy CM rank is ***equivalent to the rank of cabinet minister*** in the state, and has same pays and perks as Cabinet Minister.
- The post is considered as *second highest ranking Executive officer* of the State Council of Ministers.
- **Portfolios-** It holds *relatively smaller portfolios* as compared to the Chief Minister and the actual importance of Deputy CM is based on the portfolio which he holds.
- **Financial Powers**- The deputy CM *does not enjoy* any specific financial power and holds the same financial powers as other cabinet ministers.
- Even for his own portfolio, the Deputy CM has to take approval of the chief minister for any expenditure over and above the allocated budget.
- Deputy CM has no authority to see the files earmarked for CM and the portfolios allotted to Deputy CM are routed to CM via Deputy CM.

What is the significance of Deputy CM?

- **Reduce the incidents of Anti-Defection** by acting as bridge between ruling party and its allies, hence brings more political stability in coalition government.
- It reflects *the political compulsion* and importance of individual/party holding the post.
- **Improves Governance** and simplifies administration by allocating portfolios.
- **Better representation of the community** which further enhances the public trust in the Government.
- It is a ***balancing power equation*** signalling representation of caste or community,
    - A post to accommodate coalition parties or
    - When there is no single leader who commands unchallenged authority in the party in power, and loyalty across all the key interest groups in the state.
- **Potential successor to Chief Minister** and ensures transparency and accountability.

What are the concerns?

- It *doesn't have a constitutional backing*, no clarity in their role and function hence can be exploited by the Chief Minister according to his whims and fancies.
- Deputy CM is a political post which *doesn't have limit on number* of Deputy CMs a CM can appoint which may lead to more appeasement of coalition parties and allies.
- Deputy CM role is *equivalent to Cabinet minister*, already there is a separate post of cabinet minister which may lead to complexities in governance and administration.

What lies ahead?

- A proper definition and details regarding the role and function of Deputy CM must be framed.
- There should *be limit on the number of Deputy CMs* a Chief Minister can appoint, this would simplify the complexities associated with the post.
- Proper political literacy and awareness regarding this post must reach the Citizens of India.

Quick facts

Deputy Prime Minister

- Deputy Prime Minister is the second highest ranking minister of the Union Council of Ministers, which is not a constitutional post.
- The *first and longest served Deputy PM* of Independent India is ***Sardar Vallabhai Patel***.
- Since 1947, India has 7 deputy PMs, of which none having at least one full term.
- ***Lal Krishna Advani*** was the *seventh and last person* to serve as the Deputy PM of India.

References

1. Indian Express| New Deputy CM in Maharashtra
2. Indian Express| Explained Deputy CM



SHANKAR
IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering