

CABINET SECRETARY
NEW DELHI

PRABHAT KUMAR

D.O. No. 48011/1/98-0 &M

Dated the 23rd May 1998

My dear Secretary,

You are aware that Members of Parliament have been complaining about non-receipt of replies to their letters written to the Central Ministers/Senior Officers. In some cases, these letters are neither acknowledged nor the final replies are sent in spite of reminders from the MPs. You may recall that the former Minister of State for Personnel had written letters to all the Ministers/Ministers of State on this subject in compliance with an assurance given in Parliament.

2. As you would be aware, clear guidelines have been laid down in the Central Secretariat Manual of Office Procedure regarding the level at which a reply should be sent, the time frame in which the acknowledgements and interim replies should be sent, and the need for fortnightly monitoring of disposal of such references by the senior officers. Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances has been reiterating these guidelines from time to time. However, I would like to enclose paras 57, 60 and 122 of the MOP for your ready reference to ensure that the letters from Members of Parliament are replied to promptly, and time limits for final reply are enforced.

3. I would urge that proper courtesy and consideration is given to the Members of Parliament/State Legislature by all the officers in your department and agencies under it. Appointments desired by them for discussion on a Department-related issue should be promptly given by senior officers. Further, senior officers should personally attend to the telephones from the MPs/MLAs and should not ignore telephone messages left for them by the MPs/MLAs in their absence.

4. Suitable instructions may please be issued to all the attached/subordinate offices and public sector undertakings attached to your Ministry/Department with a copy to Cabinet Secretariat and the Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,
Sd/-
(Prabhat Kumar)

To,

All the Secretaries of the Govt. of India.

*Paras 57, 60 & 122 of Central Secretariat Manual of Office Procedure
(Eleventh Edition, 1996)*

57. Correspondence with Member of Parliament

(1) Communications received from Members of Parliament should be attended to promptly.

(2) Where a communication is addressed to a Minister, it should, as far as practicable, be replied to by the Minister himself. In other cases, a reply should normally be issued over the signature of an officer of the rank of Secretary only.

(3) Where, however, a communication is addressed to the head of an attached or subordinate office. Public Sector Undertaking financial institutions (including nationalised banks) Division/Branch Incharge in a ministry/department/organization, it should be replied to by the addressee himself. In routine matters not involving question of policy, he may send an appropriate reply on his own. In matters involving questions of policy the officer should have prior consultation with higher authorities before sending a reply. It should, however, be ensured that minimum level at which such replies are sent to Members of Parliament is that of Under Secretary and that also in letter form only.

(4) Normally Information sought by a Member should be supplied unless it is of such a nature that it would have been denied to him even if asked for on the floor of the Houses of Parliament.

(5) As far as possible, in corresponding with Members of Parliament, pre-printed or cyclostyled replies should be avoided.

(6) In case reference from an ex-Member of Parliament (or MP who has not been re-elected) is addressed to a Minister or Secretary, reply to such reference may be sent by the concerned Divisional Head after obtaining approval of the Secretary of the ministry/department. In case the reference is addressed to a lower level officer, reply to such reference could be sent by the officer on his own in non-policy cases and after obtaining approval of the higher authorities in policy cases. However, the minimum level at which reply could be sent should be that of an Under Secretary and that too in letter form only.

60. Prompt response to letters received

(1) Each communication received from Members of Parliament, a member of the Public, a recognised association or a public body will be replied to within 15 days.

(2) Where (i) delay is anticipated in sending a final reply, or (ii) information has to be obtained from another ministry or another office, an interim reply will be sent within a fortnight indicating the possible date by which a final reply can be given.

(3) If any such communication is wrongly addressed to a department, it will be transferred promptly (within three days) to the appropriate department under intimation to the party concerned.

(4) Where the request of a member of the public cannot be acceded to for any reason, reasons for not acceding to such a request should be given.

(5) As far as possible, requests from members of public, should be looked at from the user's point of view and not solely from the point of view of what may be administratively convenient.

122. Watch on disposal of communications received from Members of Parliament

The personal section of each joint secretary/director (if the director submits cases direct to secretary/additional secretary) will maintain a separate register of communications received from Members of Parliament, in the form given in Appendix 45. The serial number at which a letter is entered in this register will be prominently marked on that letter together with its date of registration e.g., '125/JS/(P)/MP' 20.3.96.

(2) To keep a special watch on speedy disposal of communications received from Members of Parliament, each section will;

(a) maintain a register as in form at Appendix 46; and

(b) mark out prominently those communications finally disposed of by rounding off the serial numbers of the register in red ink.

(3) If for any reason an M.P.'s letter is received by a section without being registered in the personal section of the joint secretary/director, immediate steps will be taken to get it registered there.

(4) On the 1st and 15th day of each month, each section will submit the register along with the report in the form at Appendix 47 to the under secretary/deputy secretary, Particulars of communications pending for more than a fortnight will be given in the form at Appendix 48. The report, with the remarks of under secretary/deputy secretary, will be submitted to the Director/Joint Secretary and register will be returned to the section.

(5) The personal section of the joint secretary/director will check whether all the communications entered in its register figure in the reports sent by the sections. If any discrepancy is found, it should be reconciled. Thereafter, the report will be submitted to the joint secretary/director for scrutiny and for such other action as he may consider appropriate.

(6) Ministries may through departmental instructions include additional columns in the forms at Appendices 45, 46, 47 and 48 to suit local needs.