

UPSC Civil Services Examination

UPSC Notes [GS-I]

Topic: Government of India Act 1858 [NCERT Notes For Modern Indian History for UPSC]

The Government of India Act 1858 was an Act of the British parliament that transferred the government and territories of the [East India Company](#) to the British Crown. The company's rule over British territories in India came to an end and it was passed directly to the British government.

To know more about the [legislation passed in British India](#), click on the linked article.

Overview of the Government of India Act, 1858

A cursory detail of the act is given in the table below:

Government of India Act, 1858

Long Title	An Act for the Better Government of India
Territorial Extent	Territories under direct British control as well as the Princely State who had to accept the suzerainty of the British Crown
Enacted by	Parliament of Great Britain
Royal Assent	2nd August 1858
Commenced	1st November 1858
Status	Amended

Government of India Act 1858

Background

- The Revolt of 1857 served as a jolt to the British government.
- There was widespread resentment against the company in Britain as the policies of the company were blamed for the revolt.
- Queen Victoria, who was the monarch of Britain, also became the sovereign of British territories in India, with the title "Empress of India" as a result of this Act.

Features of Government of India Act 1858

1. Provisions of the Government of India Act 1858

- East India Company was liquidated.
- Indian territories of Britain were to be governed in the name of the British Queen.
- The Court of Directors and the Board of Control were scrapped.
- The powers of the Company's Court of Directors were vested with the Secretary of State for India.
- This Secretary of State was to be a British MP and a member of the Prime Minister's cabinet. He was to be assisted by a council of 15 members.
- He was also the channel of communication between the British government in Britain and the Indian administration. He also had the power to send secret despatches to India without consulting his council.
- Via the Secretary of State, the British parliament could ask questions regarding Indian affairs.
- The representative of the British government in India was the Governor-General and Viceroy (both the same person to avoid conflict).
- The Viceroy and the governors of the various presidencies were appointed by the Crown.
- The Viceroy was to be assisted with an Executive Council.
- This act made India a direct British colony.
- This act abolished the dual government of the [Pitt's India Act](#).
- This act also ended the [doctrine of lapse](#).
- The Indian Civil Services was to be instituted for the administration of the country. There was provision for Indians also to be admitted to the service.
- It was decided that the remaining Indian princes and chiefs (more than 560 in number) would have their independent status provided they accept British suzerainty.

2. Facts – Government of India Act 1858

- First Secretary of State for India: Lord Stanley
- Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli was opposed to the crown directly ruling India, but his fellow MP's did not agree with his views and the bill passed the House of Commons easily.
- First Governor-General and Viceroy of India: Lord Canning

To know more about the [Governor Generals of Bengal and India](#), visit the linked article.