

The Indian Order of Precedence

The Indian Order of Precedence is a protocol list establishing the hierarchy of important government officials for ceremonial purposes. It's a favourite topic for UPSC Prelims because of its many nuances and potential for confusion. Here are the key notes and common traps to watch out for.

Key Ranks (Top 10)

01

President

02

Vice-President

03

Prime Minister

04

Governors of states (within their respective states)

05

Former Presidents

06

Chief Justice of India, Speaker of the Lok Sabha

5A. Deputy Prime Minister

(These two are of equal rank)

07

Cabinet Ministers of the Union, Chief Ministers of states (within their respective states), Former Prime Ministers, Leaders of Opposition in Rajya Sabha & Lok Sabha

08

Ambassadors, Chief Ministers (when outside their respective states), Governors (when outside their respective states)

7A. Holders of the Bharat Ratna

09

Judges of the Supreme Court

10

Deputy Chairman, Rajya Sabha, Deputy Chief Ministers of States, Deputy Speaker, Lok Sabha

9A. Chairperson, UPSC, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC), Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG)



Common UPSC Prelims Traps

Here are the specific points of confusion that are often tested:

Trap 1: Rank Equivalence

Question setters love to ask you to compare ranks. Remember who shares a **rank**.

- **Rank 6: Chief Justice of India (CJI) = Speaker of Lok Sabha**. They are at the same level. A common question might place one above the other.
- **Rank 9A: UPSC Chairperson = CEC = CAG**. These heads of key **constitutional** bodies are placed together.

Trap 2: "Within State" vs. "Outside State" Protocol

This is the most frequently tested nuance.

- A **Governor** is ranked **#4 "within state"** their own **state** but drops to **#8** when they are **"outside state"**.
- Similarly, a **Chief Minister** is ranked **#7 "within state"** their own **state** but drops to **#8** when **"outside state"**.

More Critical Traps to Watch

Trap 3: Constitutional vs. Ceremonial Order

- Not a Line of Succession: The Order of Precedence is for seating at official ceremonials. It has NO legal or constitutional basis and is NOT the line of succession to the office of the President. The Vice-President succeeds the President.
- Maintained by: The list is maintained by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Trap 4: Unique and Special Ranks

These are outliers and easy to test.

- Holders of Bharat Ratna (Rank 7A): They are placed very high, above Ambassadors and Supreme Court judges. This is a unique civilian honour recognised in the protocol.
- Former Presidents (Rank 5) are placed above the serving CJI and Speaker.
- Former Prime Ministers (Rank 7) are ranked alongside Union Cabinet Ministers.

Final Key Points for Success



Trap 5: Comparing Top Officials

Pay close attention to the top of the list.

- The **Prime Minister** (#3) is below the **Vice-President** (#2).
- The **CJI** and **Speaker** (#6) are ranked below **Former Presidents** (#5) and the **Deputy PM** (if any, #5A).

By focusing on these specific traps—rank equivalence, state-based protocol changes, unique civilian ranks, and the **ceremonial** nature of the list—you can confidently tackle questions on this topic.

UPSC Prelims Practice Questions

Question 1: Consider the following statements about the Indian Order of Precedence:

- 1. The **Chief Justice of India** ranks higher than the **Speaker** of Lok Sabha
- 2. A **Governor** ranks **4th within their state** but **8th outside their state**
- 3. **Former Presidents** rank below the serving **Prime Minister**

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 2 and 3 only

Question 2: With reference to the Indian Order of Precedence, consider the following statements:

- 1. Holders of **Bharat Ratna** are placed at **rank 7A**
- 2. The **order determines the constitutional line of succession**
- 3. **Former Prime Ministers** rank alongside **Union Cabinet Ministers**

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 1 and 3 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) All of the above

Question 3: Consider the following pairs:

- 1. **UPSC Chairperson** - Same rank as **Chief Election Commissioner (CEC)**
- 2. **Deputy Prime Minister** - **Rank 5A** (if the position exists)
- 3. **Chief Ministers** - Always rank **7th regardless of location**

Which of the pairs given above is/are correctly matched?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 1 and 2 only
- (c) 2 and 3 only
- (d) All of the above

Answer Key:

- 1. (b) - Only statement 2 is correct
- 2. (b) - Statements 1 and 3 are correct
- 3. (b) - Pairs 1 and 2 are correctly matched