FACT SHEET

KEY STAKEHOLDERS' SEMINAR PRESENTATION ON PREPARATION TOWARDS 2022 NATIONAL GENERAL ELECTIONS

The roles of the Parliament Clerk

"Based on presentation by the Office of Parliament Clerk on 27 October, 2021"

THE NATIONAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE
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Background

The Clerk of Parliament is the administrative head of Parliamentary Service and reports to the Speaker. He ensures efficient management and delivery of services. The Clerk is also responsible for procedures in and outside of the Chamber including recording of votes and proceedings of Parliament, safe keeping of records and papers of Parliament and the printing and distribution of bills and notices. During the sitting days, he is the principal Clerk at the table providing advice to the Speaker, the Government, the Opposition and other Members of Parliament (MPs).

The Clerk of Parliament is also one of the Constitutional Office holders who have a key role to play before and after the National General Elections (NGEs). The Clerk's role after the elections is more notable than before elections, especially in relation to the election of the Speaker and the formation of the government.

Roles of the Parliament Clerk before elections

Some of the responsibilities that the Parliament Clerk is required to undertake before the elections include:

- duly notes the date set for the return of the writs and then allows the Electoral Commission to go ahead and conduct the election;
- confirms with the outgoing prime minister and the outgoing speaker for the date for the first meeting of parliament;
- ensures that the parliament building is ready for a new parliament and parliamentary service and the staff are fully functional; and
- ensures that staff prepare for an induction program for the new members of parliament coming in.

Roles of the Parliament Clerk after elections

After the election, it is the Parliament Clerk's responsibility to:

- ensure that the parliament sits within one week of the return of the writs which is provided for under Section 124 of the National Constitution;
- ensure that all the writs of MPs who were duly elected are confirmed and, on the listing sent by the Governor General's office;
- organise the swearing in of all the MPs by the Chief Justice;
- ensure that parliamentary staff prepare all the declarations and oaths that need to be signed and made; and
- preside over and conduct the election of the new Parliament Speaker as part of parliamentary procedure.

After the election of the Speaker, the Parliament Clerk's role is to:

- assist and advise the Speaker on the conduct of the election of the Prime Minister and the formation of the government;
- assist the speaker to prepare for the opening of the new parliament;
- ensures that all the new MPs are put on the payroll and those that have not been re-elected are paid out their final entitlements; and
- conduct an induction for the new MPs.

Besides his/her primary responsibilities, the Parliament Clerk is also a Commissioner on the Integrity of Political Parties and Candidates Commission (IPPCC) to assist where it can in relation to the preparation of candidates.

Other points to take note of include:

- The Government of the day sets the date of the return of the writs.
- Induction usually takes one week and it includes stakeholders like the Ombudsman Commission and Department of Finance.
- Once the election starts, the government appoints a caretaker cabinet. That cabinet stays until the election of the Prime Minister.

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