

Background of the Act

The Government of India Act 1935 was the longest law made by the British for India. It came after the Simon Commission and Round Table Conferences. Its purpose was to give limited self-rule to Indians but still keep them under British control.

Main Features

The Act introduced a federal government, provincial autonomy, and separate electorates. It also allowed dyarchy at the center, meaning the Governor kept control over important subjects like defense and foreign affairs.

Provincial Autonomy

Provinces were allowed to make laws on local matters like education and health. Ministers were responsible to elected assemblies, but Governors still had special powers to overrule them. So, the autonomy was only partial.

Federal Structure

The plan was to form a federation of British provinces and princely states with a central legislature of two houses. But since princely states refused to join, the federal system never worked, and the center remained under British control.

Separation of Burma & Other Changes

Burma was separated from India, Sindh was separated from Bombay, and Orissa became a new province. Seats were also given to minorities, but this system of separate representation increased divisions among communities.

Failure of the Act

The Act failed because the federation plan collapsed when princely states refused to join. Governors and the Viceroy had overriding powers, so real authority was not in Indian hands. Separate electorates divided people instead of uniting them. Both Congress and Muslim League rejected it, seeing it as another way for the British to maintain control.