CHAPTER 3

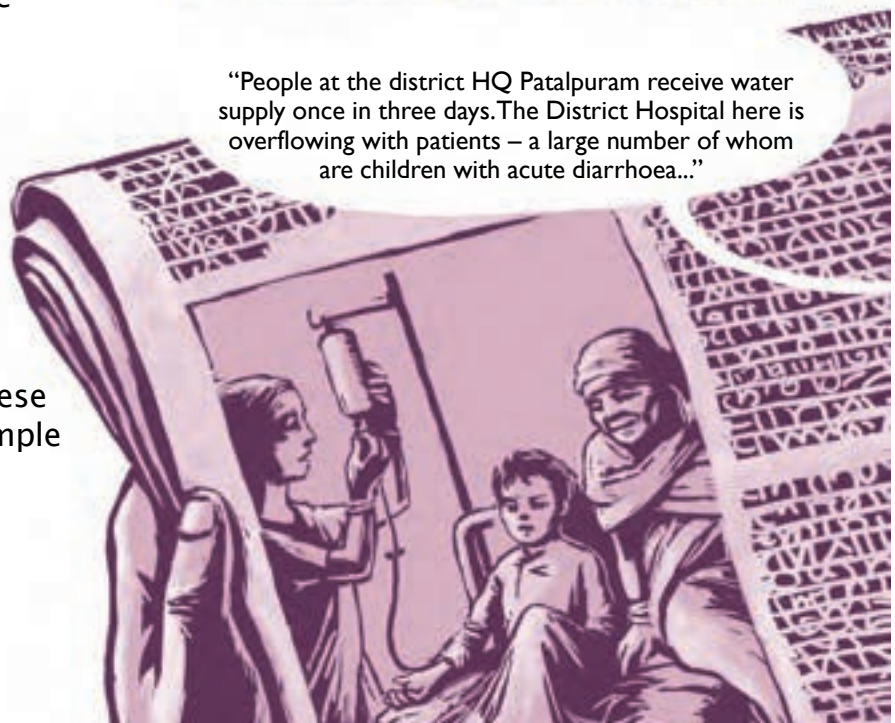
How the State Government Works

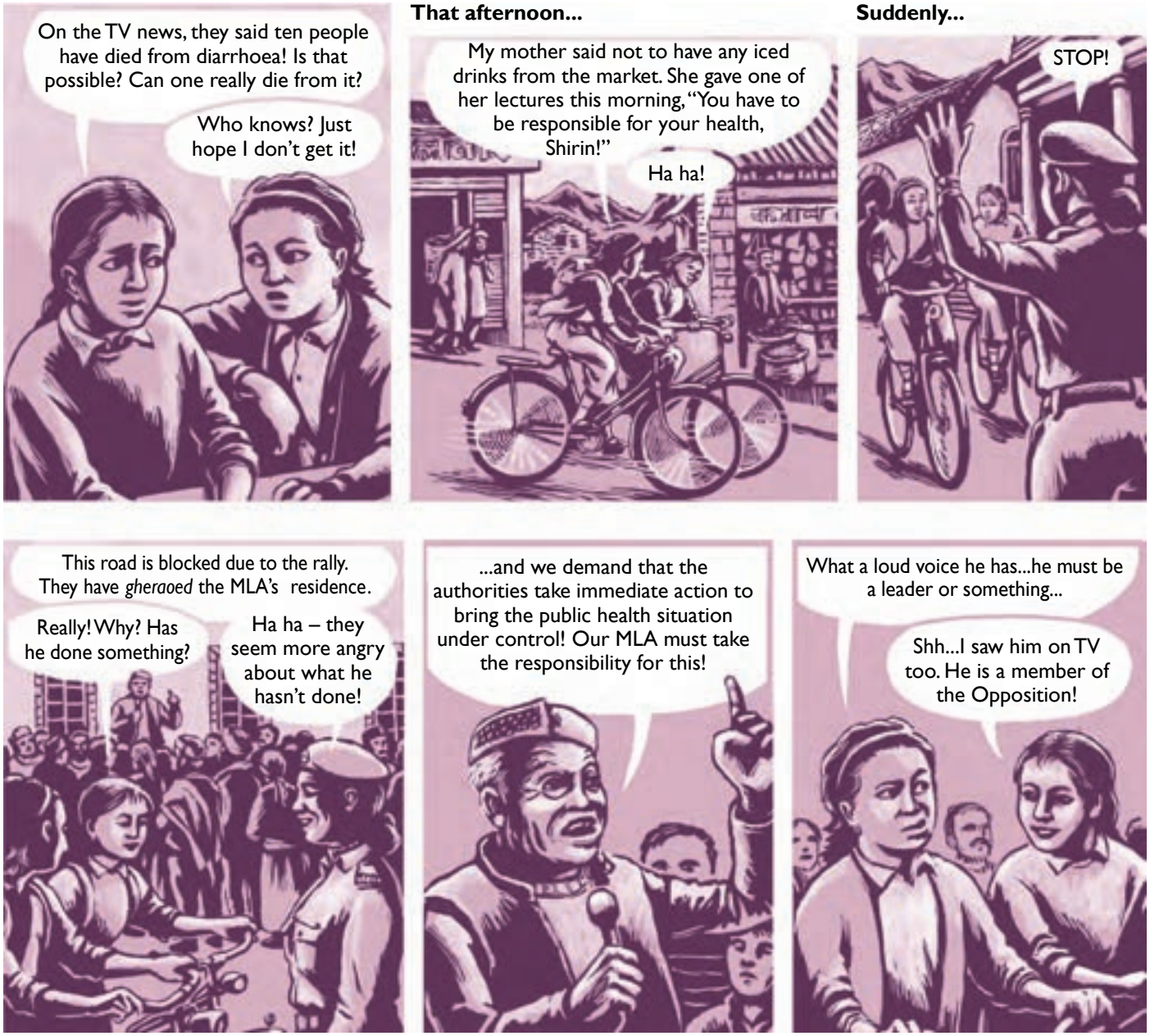
Last year, we discussed the fact that government works at three levels – local, state and national – and looked at the work of local government in some detail. In this chapter, we examine the work of the government at the state level. How does this take place in a democracy? What is the role of a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) and Ministers? How do people express their views or demand action from government? We look at these questions through the example of health.

WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY?









Who is an MLA?

In the above section, you have read about some events in Patalpuram. You may be familiar with some official names such as Collector, Medical Officer, etc. But have you heard of an MLA and the Legislative Assembly? Do you know the MLA of your area? Can you identify which party she or he belongs to?

Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) are elected by the people. They then become members of the legislative assembly and also form the

What is happening in Patalpuram ?

Why is this problem serious?

What action do you think can be taken in the above situation and who do you think should take this action? Discuss.

Discuss the following terms with your teacher–public meeting, States in India, constituency, majority, ruling party and opposition.

Can you explain the following terms–majority, ruling party, opposition with reference to your state.



The state of Himachal Pradesh is coloured in purple in the above thumbnail map of India.

Using a pencil outline the following on the map given on page 97:

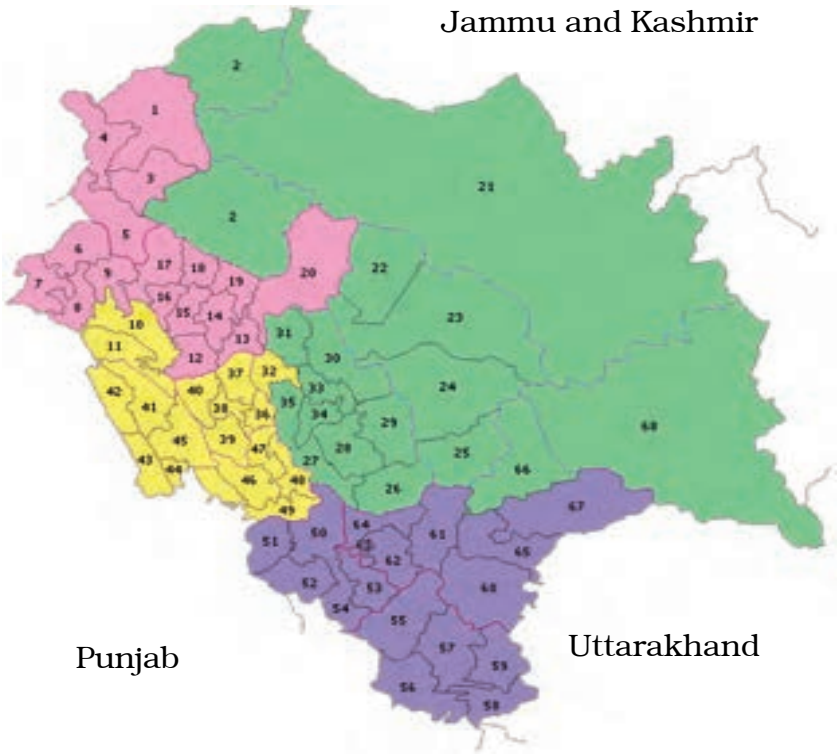
(i) the state that you live in;

(ii) the state of Himachal Pradesh.

government. In this way we say that the MLAs represent people. The example below will help us understand this better.

Every state in India has a Legislative Assembly. Each state is divided into different areas or constituencies. For example, look at the map below. It shows that the state of Himachal Pradesh is divided into 68 assembly constituencies. From each **constituency,** the people elect one representative who then becomes a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA). You would have noticed that people stand for elections in the name of different parties. These MLAs, therefore, belong to different political parties.

How do people who are MLAs become ministers or chief minister? A political party whose MLAs have won more than half the number of constituencies in a state can be said to be in a **majority**. The political party that has the majority is called the ruling party and all other members are called the **opposition**. For example, the Legislative Assembly of the state of Himachal Pradesh has 68 MLA constituencies.



Results of the Assembly Elections in Himachal Pradesh in 2017

Political party	Number of MLAs elected
Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)	44
Indian National Congress (INC)	21
Communist Party of India (Marxist)	1
Independents (who don't belong to any party)	2
Total	**68**

For more details, visit http://hpvidhansabha.nic.in

Candidates from various political parties won the 2017 assembly elections and became MLAs. Since the total number of MLAs in the Legislative Assembly is 68, a political party would have needed to have more than 34 MLAs in order to gain a majority. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) with 44 MLAs had the majority and it became the ruling party. All other MLAs became the opposition. In this case, the Indian National Congress (INC) was the major opposition party, since it had the largest number of MLAs after the BJP. Among the opposition were other parties, including those who had been elected as independent candidates.

Construct a table, similar to the one given for Himachal Pradesh, for your state.

After the elections, the MLAs belonging to the ruling party will elect their leader who will become the chief minister. In this case, the BJP MLAs chose Shri Jairam Thakur as their leader and he became the chief minister. The chief minister then selects other people as ministers. After the elections, it is the Governor of the state who appoints the chief minister and other ministers.

The Head of the State is the Governor. She/He is appointed by the Central Government to ensure that the State Government works within the rules and regulations of the Constitution. Find out the name of Governor of your State.

At times, the ruling party may not be a single party but a group of parties working together. This is called a coalition. Discuss with your teacher.

The chief minister and other ministers have the responsibility of running various government departments or ministries. They have separate offices. A Legislative Assembly is a place where all the MLAs, whether from the ruling party or from the opposition meet to discuss various things. Hence, some MLAs have dual responsibilities: one as an MLA and the other as a minister. We will read about this further.

A debate in the Legislative Assembly

Afreen, Sujata and many other students from their school travelled to the state capital to visit the Legislative Assembly which was housed in an impressive building. The children were excited. After security checks, they were taken upstairs. There was a gallery from where they could see the large hall below. There were rows and rows of desks.

This Assembly was going to have a debate on a current problem. During this time, MLAs can express their opinions and ask questions related to the issue or give suggestions about what should be done by the government. Those who wish to, can respond to this. The minister then replies to the questions and tries to assure the Assembly that adequate steps are being taken.

The chief minister and other ministers have to take decisions and run the government. We usually hear about them or see them in the news channels or in the papers. However, whatever decisions are being taken have to be approved by the members of the legislative assembly. In a democracy, these members can ask questions, debate an important issue, decide where money should be spent, etc. They have the main authority.

MLA 1: In my constituency of Akhandagaon, during the last three weeks, there were 15 deaths because of diarrhoea. I think it is a shame that this government has not been able to check the situation of a simple problem like diarrhoea while proclaiming itself to be a champion of technology. I would call the attention of the minister in charge of health to take immediate measures to control the situation.

MLA 2: My question is why are government hospitals in such a bad situation? Why is the government not appointing proper doctors and other medical staff in the district? I would also like to know how the government plans to deal with this situation

which is affecting a large number of people and is also spreading. This is an epidemic.

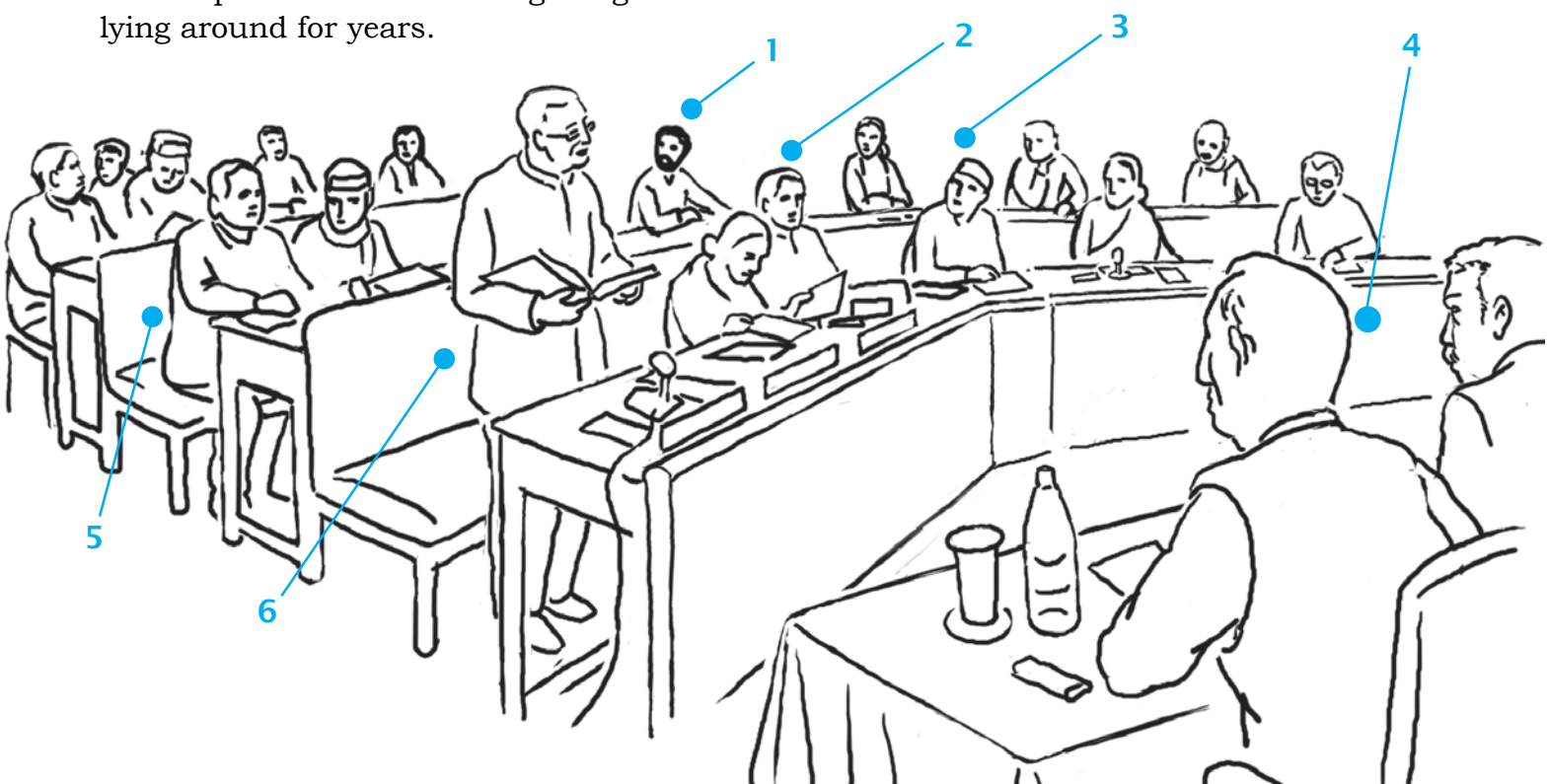
MLA 3: My constituency of Tolpatti too has a serious shortage of water. Women travel up to 3 or 4 kilometres to collect water. How many tankers have been put into service to supply water? How many wells and ponds have been cleaned and disinfected?

MLA 4: I think my colleagues are exaggerating the problem. The government has taken steps to control the situation. Water tankers have been put into service. ORS packets are being distributed. The government is doing everything possible to help people.

MLA 5: We have very poor facilities in our hospitals. There are hospitals that do not have a doctor and no medical staff has been appointed for the last few years. In another hospital, the doctor has gone on a long leave. This is a shame. I think the situation is going from bad to worse. How are we going to ensure that ORS packets reach all families in the affected areas?

MLA 6: The opposition members are unnecessarily blaming the government. The previous government did not pay any attention to sanitation. We have now taken up a drive to clear the garbage that has been lying around for years.

Can you identify the MLAs of the ruling party and the opposition in the illustration? Colour the ruling party in one colour and the opposition in another.



In the earlier section you have read about a debate in the Legislative Assembly. The members were debating the action taken or not taken by the government. This is because the MLAs are together responsible for the work of the government. In common usage the word 'government' refers to government departments and various ministers who head them. The overall head is the chief minister. More correctly, this is called the executive part of the government. All the MLAs who gather together (assemble) in the legislative assembly are called the Legislature. They are the ones who authorise and supervise their work. As we saw in the earlier section, it is from among them that the head of the executive, or the chief minister is formed.

What were the main arguments put forward by different MLAs who thought that the government was not taking the situation in a serious manner?

If you were the health minister, how would you respond to the above discussion?

Do you think the above debate would have been useful in some ways? How? Discuss.

In the working of the government, explain the difference between being an MLA and an MLA who is also a minister.

Working of the government

The Legislative Assembly is not the only place where opinions are expressed about the work of the government and action is demanded. You will find newspapers, TV channels and other organisations regularly talking about the government. In a democracy, there are various ways through which people express their views and also take action. Let us look at one such way.

Soon after the discussion in the assembly, there was a **press conference** organised by the health minister. Large numbers of people from different newspapers were present. The minister and some government officials were also present. The minister explained the steps the government had taken. Reporters asked many questions at this meeting. These discussions were then reported in different newspapers. The following page has one such report.

During the next week, the chief minister and the minister for health visited Patalpuram district. They went to visit the families who had lost their relatives and also visited people in the hospitals. The government announced a compensation for these

Government smells the garbage

Chief Minister promises funds for work

Patalpuram | Ravi Ahuja

During the last few weeks, there have been many deaths in some districts of our state. There has been a strong reaction that the government has not taken this seriously. The health minister explained today at a press conference that his government has asked all the collectors and the chief medical officers to take urgent measures. The most important problem is that of drinking water. The minister said that they intend to supply drinking water to every village through tanker trucks. The chief minister has promised funds for this work. They also plan to start a campaign to inform people about the steps that can be taken to prevent diarrhoea. When a reporter asked him as to what steps are being taken to see that garbage that has been lying around for months is quickly collected, the chief minister said that he would look into this.

Write two measures that the goverment undertook for controlling diarrhoea?

What is the purpose of a press conference? How does the press conference help you get information on what the goverment is doing?

families. The chief minister also said that he thought the problem was not only one of sanitation but also of a lack of clean drinking water. He said that a high-level enquiry committee will be asked to look into the needs of the district to provide sanitation facilities and would request the minister for Public Works to take care of the needs of proper water supply in the region.

As you saw above, the people in power like the chief minister and the minister have to take action. They do so through various departments like the Public Works Department, the Agriculture Department, the Health Department, the Education Department and so on. They also have to answer questions that are asked in the Legislative Assembly and convince people asking the questions that proper steps are being taken. At the same time, newspapers and the media widely discuss the issue and the government has to respond, for example, by holding the press conferences.

The government can also decide to make new laws for the state regarding sanitation and health facilities. For example, it may make it compulsory for municipal corporations to ensure that there are adequate toilets in every urban area. It may also ensure that a health worker is appointed in every village. This act of making laws on certain issues is done in the Legislative Assembly of each state. The various government departments then implement these laws. Laws for the entire country are made in the Parliament. You will read more about the Parliament next year.

In a democracy, it is the people who elect their representatives as Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) and, thus, it is the people who have the main authority. The ruling party members then form the government and some members are appointed ministers. These ministers are in charge of various departments of the government such as health in the above example. Whatever work is done by these departments has to be approved by the members of the legislative assembly.



In a democracy, people organise meetings to voice their opinions and protest against the government.

Name of department	Examples of their work
School Education	
Public Works Department	
Agriculture	

Find out with the help of your teacher, the work done by the government departments mentioned above, and fill in the table.

A wallpaper project

A wallpaper is an interesting activity through which research can be done on particular topics of interest. The following photographs explain the different aspects involved in creating a wallpaper in a classroom.

After introducing the topic and having a brief discussion with the whole class, the teacher divides the class into groups. The group discusses the issue and decides what it would like to include in the wall-paper. Children then work individually or in pairs to read the collected material and write their observations or experiences. They can do this through creating stories, poems, case studies, interviews, etc.



The group looks at the material that they have selected, drawn or written. They read each other's writing and provide feedback to each other. They make decisions on what should be included and finalise the layout for the wallpaper.





Each group then presents the wallpaper to the entire class. It is important that more than one member of the group is asked to present and that each group is allotted the same amount of time to discuss their work. After each group has presented, it would be a good idea to have a feedback session on the following – What more could they do on their own? How could their work be organised better? How could writing and presentation be improved upon?



This wallpaper about the 2006 dengue epidemic was prepared by children of Class VI B of Kendriya Vidyalaya II, Hindon, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh.

Do a similar wallpaper project about any issue connected with the working of your State Government like an education programme, any law and order issue, midday meal scheme, etc.

EXERCISES

1. Use the terms 'constituency' and 'represent' to explain who an MLA is and how is the person elected?

2. How did some MLAs become Ministers? Explain.

3. Why should decisions taken by the Chief Minister and other ministers be debated in the Legislative Assembly?

4. What was the problem in Patalpuram? What discussion/ action was taken by the following? Fill in the table.

Public meeting
Legislative Assembly
Press conference
Chief Minister

5. What is the difference between the work that MLAs do in the Assembly and the work done by government departments?

Glossary

Constituency: A particular area from which all the voters living there choose their representatives. This could be, for example, a panchayat ward or an area that chooses an MLA.

Majority: This is a situation when more than half the number in a group supports a decision or an idea. This is also called a simple majority.

Opposition: This refers to elected representatives who are not members of the ruling party and who play the role of questioning government decisions and actions as well as raise new issues for consideration in the Assembly.

Press Conference: A gathering of journalists from the media who are invited to hear about and ask questions on a particular issue and are then expected to report on this to the larger public.