Context and Challenges of the Civil Services

Sir, I would like to present the recommendations of the panel that discussed the 'Context and Challenges of the Civil Services' today. The panel was chaired by Shri Suresh Prabhu, Hon'ble Minister for Railways and comprised of Mr. TSR Subramanianm, Former Cabinet Secretary, Mr. S. Jaishankar, Foreign Secretary, Mr. Shekhar Gupta, Eminent journalist and editor in India Today, and Mr. K. Vijay Kumar, Senior Security Advisor in Ministry of Home Affairs. It brought to the fore some substantive and important suggestions on how Civil Services can become a more effective tool of public service delivery and contribute to the development of the country.

The panel was of the view that there should be lateral exchange of expertise between the Government and Private Sector. Timely completion of projects should be rewarded. The panel also felt that tenural stability was key to performance and productivity of the Civil Services. It was also observed that Civil services could be empowered to deliver if there is least political interference. It was further observed that Administrative Reforms should focus upon electoral, political, judicial reforms etc. The panel also observed that there should be greater reliance on Technology.

The civil services must brace up with the tempers of the changing times and meet the requirements of the citizens. The challenges of public service delivery necessitate new delivery models, delivering value for money and making policies better designed for implementation. Process and policy reforms could be achieved through continuous capacity building of the public servants. A governance system which espouses the idea of maximum governance and minimum government has to have a bureaucracy which is ready to embrace skill, scale and speed. To realize this goal reforms have to be directed so that the Civil service become : (a) skilled (b) open (c) converged and (d) connected.

I. **Skilled Bureaucracy : There is a need for development of new skill :**
   - Civil Servants have to equip themselves with domain/sector specific skills.
   - **Develop Project/Programme Management skills** to implement large projects in a timely and cost effective manner. This should also include commercial, legal and financial negotiation and contract management skills.
   - **Digital Skills** to be used for improved service delivery. There should be increased reliance on e-governance and mobile governance.
   - **Capacity/Skill building is vital for lower bureaucracy** since they are in the front line of the public service delivery. There is a need to enhance both their professional and soft skills.

II. **Converged Bureaucracy : There is a need to break down the silos within Government to unlock productivity and outcomes :**

   - **Need for Horizontal convergence in vertical administration –** Greater thrust should be accorded on cross departmental working, interdepartmental engagements, and lateral communication among and within departments.

- **Shared services model may be adopted** for services such as IT, Finance, procurement etc. so that there is no duplication in effort and cost.

III. **Open Bureaucracy :** A culture of openness needs to be cultivated towards new ideas, new challenges and innovation to bring about continues transformation for better service delivery.

- **Open Policy Formulation** – may be undertaken through openness to new thinking or in the gathering of evidence & insight from external experts. Collaborative approaches to policy making by taking views from members of civil society, think tanks, Universities, other countries and states.
- **Social Media for Participatory Governance** – Social media, crowd sourcing and open sourcing can be powerful tools to connect with people and promote participatory governance.
- **Constantly engaging with the private sector –** Culture of openness needs to be adopted for new forms of partnership with private sector.

IV. **Connected Bureaucracy –** There is a need for the Bureaucracy to be connected within and globally to imbibe the best practice.

- **Need to be globally connected with the** counterpart organizations and have horizontal networks across the world. Understanding global best practices will help our bureaucracy to develop world class acumen.
- **Horizontol Connectivity between the State Departments** There is a need for the State Government departments to share the learning and best practices with their counterparts in other states.
- Improvement in Interdepartmental connectivity through Government process re-engineering, simplification of rules.

In conclusion the panel felt that there is an urgent need for balanced development across the country. The mechanics of good governance have to be replicated and adapted throughout. There is a need for a common and integrated action plan of Nation Building through an Effective Delivery of Public Services in a Transparent, Accountable, Citizen Friendly, Innovative, High Quality, Cost effective and Timely manner.