

Shri Ramesh Chandra Misra (Secretary, Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances and Pensions, Government of India), Secretaries from Administrative Reforms Departments of State Governments and Union Territories, Officials of Department of AR & PG, delegates, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Annual Conference of Secretaries (Administrative Reforms) is a significant event for the country. It is an important event because (i) administrative reforms are crucial for the welfare of the citizens of India and institutional strengthening of the Indian democracy, and also because (ii) state governments and union territory administrations are indispensable agents of such reforms.

'Union Public Services' and 'All-India Services' come under the Union List (No. 70) of the Indian Constitution, and 'State Public Services' in the State List (No. 41).

Therefore, dialogues between the Centre and the States -- through structured meetings – on administrative reforms are necessary.

The Annual Conference we have today is 3rd in the series. I notice that there has been a systematic effort by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances of my Ministry to constantly improve the quality of discourse.

The 1st Conference, held in 2009 August, focused on (i) the institutional status of the Administrative Reforms Departments in the states, (ii) capacities created to fulfil the tasks assigned to them, (iii) implementation challenges they happened to experience, and (iv) assistance required by them from the centre – financial as well as informational.

The 2nd Conference, held in September 2010, raised the level of discussion by bringing in issues relating to (i) outcome orientation, (ii) domain competency, (iii) performance management, (iv) risk management, and (v) citizen centricity.

This Conference, which we are holding in September 2011, goes further ahead – in content, in relevance, and also in the format. There is a scope for greater participation. Content is more evidence-based. And the subjects chosen for discussion are closer to the legitimate expectations of the Indian people.

Last year the Annual Conference of Administrative Reforms Secretaries had a presentation on the 12th Report of the Second ARC, relating to Citizen Centric Administration. This year Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances of my Ministry has organized a presentation on the 15th Report, which relates to a topic where a lot depends on the initiatives taken by you as a change agent, namely, the Report on State and District Administration.

The 15th Report contains 158 recommendations, out of which the Group of Ministers in Government of India has approved 134 for implementation. The GoM approval was communicated to the Chief Secretaries of the State Governments and Administrators of UTs on 10th November, 2010 . Therefore, I expect the session on the 15th Report to be lively and sufficiently informed.

By taking the example of the 15th Report, let me highlight a broader, higher and generically more relevant point.

Administrative Reforms, anywhere, cover contemporary governance concerns. If we take the example of the 15th Report, we find extremely relevant action-points covering the very core of human democratic existence. Examples include:

Security of Tenure at the Senior Levels in the State Government.

Comprehensive Human Resource Development Policy, with training as an important component.

Documentation, institutionalization and dissemination of Good Practices by the State Administrative Training Institutes and at the district level.

Setting-up of district level training organizations to cater to the mid-career training needs of Class-III employees.

State Public Service Commission to act as a watchdog for Subordinate Service Commission, School Teachers Selection Commission, and District Recruitment Boards.

Creating special RTI Cells in the Collectorates for reducing delays and element of subjectivity in the lower level formations.

Making District Officer fully accountable to the State Government on regulatory / and certain other matters.

Introduction / strengthening of the Integrated Financial Advisor System in the State Departments.

Setting up of the Internal Audit Committees in the State Departments.

Shifting to the multi-layer budgeting system in the State Governments.

State Governments specifying a time-frame for the Departments for follow-up action on Audit Compliance.

Specific recommendations for administration of the Union Territories and governance in the North-Eastern States.

As I said, 15th Report of the Second ARC is an example. The Second ARC has submitted fifteen reports, containing 1251 recommendations. It is possible for the State Governments to even go beyond the advisories issued by the Government of India and take a view on all the 15 Reports of the Second ARC in the thought process for subjects coming within their purview.

The emphasis of the Government of India would be on (i) systematic coordinated action within a definite time-frame, and (ii) pro-active projection of the good work done in the States and UTs in the field of Administrative Reforms.

There is considerable scope in this Conference to learn from each other – horizontally and vertically – and encourage comparative-contrastive inputs on administrative reforms. There is also a need to plan projection of successful administrative reform models from India with greater vigour.

Ladies and Gentlemen, let me now concentrate on 'Public Service Delivery' – the topic for today's panel discussion.

It is planned to discuss (i) the benchmarks of effective public service delivery, (ii) process innovations, and (iii) accountability-enhancing strategies in the contexts international, national and state-specific.

Experience of *Sevottam* has rightly been kept in the zone of discussion.

Sector-specific public service delivery reforms in health, education, and rural employment generation are also going to be discussed.

Public Service Delivery, anywhere, touches lives deeply. Associated with public services are legitimate expectations of the citizens from the State. There is also a cutting-edge level in delivery where fair play, efficiency and honesty matter most. In the eyes of the people, thus, -- people in need of care and protection in particular – 'public service delivery' becomes the *litmus-test* of governance.

Here again, there are administrative-reform innovations in the states and districts that need to be adequately and perceptively captured in discussions, and strategically conceptualized as policy input.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I would expect you to take (i) cognizance of the concerns of the citizens of India on the problems of the public service delivery in existence, and (ii) note the emergence of the demand for public service delivery as a *citizens' right* in India (in contrast to a general public duty).

There are, thus, several sectoral dimensions of basic human needs and human rights aspirations which shall have to be taken into account in the 3rd Annual Conference of Administrative Reforms Secretaries.

The Cabinet Secretary of India is coming for the Valedictory Session. It is good that he will get a brief on the discussions held in the Conference and shall take a country-wide inter-sectoral inter-departmental integrated view on issues relating to administrative reforms and public service delivery.

I shall myself be waiting for the outcomes of this Conference with high expectations.

Thanks.