

Conference of the Secretaries of the Administrative Reforms Departments of State
Governments and Union Territories
2nd September, 2011, Vigyan Bhawan Annexe, New Delhi

Hon'ble Shri V. Narayanasamy, Minister of State for Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions and Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office;

AR Secretaries of States and UTs;

Distinguished delegates;

Ladies and Gentlemen;

At the outset, let me extend a very warm welcome to all of you. It is a matter of great pleasure for us to host the third Conference of the Secretaries of the Administrative Reforms departments of State Governments and Union Territories. Through this forum, we would like to remind ourselves of our commitment to the cause of citizens and to reaffirm our commitment to the excellence in public administration and governance.

The biggest challenge facing the Governments today is ensuring effective public service delivery, and also to see that no section of the society is excluded from sharing the fruits of our economic growth. We can effectively meet this challenge, by putting our governance and administrative reform measures on the fast track. The simplification of processes, refurbishing of systems of accountability and transparency, and enhancing civil society participation in implementation of welfare projects, and other similar reforms are no longer measures that could be deferred to a later date. They are urgent and crucial. The knowledge economy has changed the gamut of activities in which the government is involved directly. The role of government is now more of a facilitator in creating an enabling milieu. Therefore, the focus of governance and expectations of the public from the government have changed dramatically. On the other hand, an array of changes in information & communication technology and expectation of multi-disciplinary capabilities have posed a challenge to the public servant. Our public services have to constantly upgrade their competence and acquire new skills to fully optimize their capability in tune with the emerging challenges. They have to gear up to be proactive rather than reactive in overcoming the obstacles posed by the fast changing environment.

We are aware that citizen-centric governance is a natural and essential phenomenon in a democratic set up. Today, there is need to evolve processes that

are responsive to the expectations of the citizen. Excellence in governance can be achieved through improvement in government structures and processes, by way of promoting transparency and accountability in all our actions with emphasis on grievance redressal, innovations in e-Governance, and quick adaptation to best practices which are successfully implemented elsewhere. The need of the hour is efficient and effective delivery of public services. To achieve these, it is necessary to bring about administrative reforms. It is all about the change we can bring or the improvement we can usher-in in the entire gamut of the government functioning to ensure that services are delivered to each and every citizen in the country. Administrative reform is a process. It is not static nor is it an end in itself. It is an incessant quest for excellence.

With reforms in focus, the second Administrative Reforms Commission was set up in August, 2005 to prepare a detailed blueprint for revamping the Public Administration System and to suggest measures to achieve a proactive, responsive, accountable, sustainable and efficient administration for the country at all levels of government. You are aware that the ARC has presented 15 Reports to the Government for consideration, making recommendations on a number of topical issues to improve delivery of public services and bringing in transparency and accountability in public decision making, which *inter alia* include, Civil Service Reforms, Personnel Administration, Ethics in Governance, Citizen-Centric Administration, Public Order, Effective Administration at State and District level etc. During the course of today's discussions, we would deal at length with some of these recommendations pertaining to State & District Administration. Being the nerve centers of administrative reforms in the States, your experiences in this regard will be very valuable inputs in this discussion.

The Department of AR & PG has created and popularized the framework of ***Sevottam*** for achieving excellence in service delivery. As you are aware, the word *Sevottam* is a fusion of two Hindi words Seva and Uttam which means 'excellence in service'. It is a framework for bringing continuous improvements in service delivery by government organizations. The *Sevottam* framework has been implemented in ten Government of India Ministries/ Departments from 2007-08 to 2010-11. As a very large number of pro-poor services are delivered by State Governments, *Sevottam* has also been implemented in four different sectors in four states, Himachal Pradesh, Karnataka, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. Fifteen Ministries / Departments have identified 17 units as pilots so far. From States, Governments of Himachal Pradesh, Assam, and Mizoram have confirmed their pilot units. Governments of Meghalaya and Andhra Pradesh have also shown interest. We have incorporated the complete details about *Sevottam* in the background paper already circulated to you.

Through a number of activities and mediums the Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances has been engaged in identifying, nurturing, documenting and popularizing the innovative practices in public administration which have run that extra mile to provide dependable services to the public at large in a transparent, efficient and effective manner. It is our experience that there is no dearth of innovative ideas and projects in our country. It is, however, necessary to painstakingly scale these up and replicate them elsewhere so that the successful initiatives do not remain confined to islands of excellence only. Whether it is the recognition given through the Prime Minister's Award for excellence in public administration or the documentation in the form of **documentary films** or through the webportal, **governance knowledge centre**, our aim is to enable others to appreciate the dynamics of administrative reform.

We sincerely appreciate the efforts put in by the Administrative Reforms Departments of the State Governments in carrying forward the public service reform agenda by promoting practical requirements of good governance, focusing on strengthening the quality and effectiveness of public administration. There is still a lot more that calls for their deeper engagement to further consolidate and sustain the momentum of reform in the field of public administration and governance. I have had the opportunity to see some of the reform measures successfully launched by the State Governments. Some of them are truly pathbreaking. The Conference of AR Secretaries and the Regional Conferences have over a period of time become very useful fora, because of providing excellent platform for sharing, exchange and interaction.

In this backdrop, today, we would be devoting ourselves to address various governance and development related issues and to take stock of our progress in our endeavour towards excellence in public service delivery. I am confident that our deliberations today would help us re dedicate ourselves to the cause of the citizens.

I wish the deliberations of the conference all success. I would be looking forward to the recommendations and the suggestions emerging from this Seminar.

I once again welcome you one and all and wish you a fruitful participation.

Thank you.