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TRIBUNE

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CIVIL SERVICE

TRIBUNE, JAN 3, 2014

Reining in bureaucracy: Haryana to have right to service commission

Pradeep Sharma

With a view to rein in bureaucracy and provide time-bound services to the citizens, the Haryana Government has issued an ordinance to constitute the Haryana Right to Service Commission (HRSC).

The Haryana Right to Service Ordinance, 2013, which would be converted into an Act by the Haryana Assembly during its forthcoming winter session, gives wide-ranging powers to the commission, including that of imposing penalties, recommending disciplinary action against erring officials, conducting inspections and taking suo motu notice of deficiency in service. Besides, the commission will have the powers of a civil court while trying a suit under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908.

Once constituted, the commission, which will consist of a Chief Commissioner and up to four Commissioners, will frame delivery schedule for various services to the citizens in the state. A committee comprising the Chief Minister, Leader of the Opposition and a Cabinet minister will recommend the names to Governor for appointment. Chief Minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda had announced the formation of the commission at the November 10 Gohana rally.

Sources said the commission would provide a three-year grievance redressal system by constituting the First Grievance Redressal Authority and Second Grievance Redressal Authority for a complaint against non-delivery of service to the citizen by the Designated Officer. Currently, there is hardly any mechanism to provide time-bound services to the citizens.

The citizen will be entitled to file an appeal to the first authority within 30 days of the rejection of the application or non-delivery of service. The first authority would be bound to decide the case within 30 days. The appeal against the first authority could be filed with the second authority within 60 days.

The second authority would direct the designated officer to provide the service within a week of the receipt of the application. In any case, the second authority will decide the case within two months. An aggrieved person can file revision petition before the commission within 90 days, the sources said.

In case of 'undue delay in providing the service', the second authority has been empowered to impose a penalty up to Rs 250 per day subject to a maximum of Rs 5,000 on the designated officer. A provision of Rs 1,000 compensation to the applicant has also been made.

Meanwhile, the commission has been given the powers to impose a penalty of Rs 25,000 on the designated officer in case of serious lapse in not providing the promised service and award a compensation of up to Rs 5,000 to the aggrieved person.

Ordinance issued

- * The Haryana Government has issued an ordinance to constitute the Haryana Right to Service Commission
- * The panel will provide 3-tier system to redress grievances
- * Will have powers for suo motu notice, conducting inspections; apart from having the powers of a civil court
- * Can also recommend disciplinary action and impose fines.

TRIBUNE, JAN 3, 2014

Wages of subservience

Post-retirement appointments push limits of legitimacy

THE appointment of retiring Chief Secretary of Haryana PK Chaudhery as Adviser, Development and Governance Reforms, has left people counting the number of superannuated top bureaucrats being offered posts that are often referred to as 'plum'. Haryana and Punjab have been particularly profligate in this regard, though the practice is prevalent at the Centre too. In many cases, the very commissions to which the appointments are made are of questionable relevance, contributing little to governance or society. At another level, governments are also routinely giving extensions to state civil service officers. The procedure for that is completely arbitrary, with no laid down criteria.

Because most of the appointments in commissions are at the whim of the political government, it is in the interest of the officers hoping to get the posts to keep the benefactors happy. That compromises their ability to function without political bias. The fact that an appointment comes as a reward for loyalty keeps the person pliant even in the post-retirement positions, in some of which they have to sit in judgement over the same government's decisions. The extension of service given to retiring officers at the relatively lower levels amounts to bypassing the constitutional scheme of things, as an extension is a virtual appointment, minus the selection procedure. The Punjab Government has been avoiding making fresh appointments.

The Punjab and Haryana High Court has on various occasions intervened in the appointment of public service and information commission heads, asking for transparent selection procedures to be laid down. This has to hold good for all appointments. Another option of a two-year cooling-off period for retiring officers before their appointment anywhere has not found favour even with the Supreme Court. But this needs more deliberation, and should not be ruled out for good. It might also be a good idea to conduct an audit of the various positions and commissions, weighing the contribution they make

against the cost incurred on them. If the Lokpal and CBI Director have to be appointed through a given process, why should there be any appointment free of due assessment.

TIMES OF INDIA, JAN 1, 2013

68% of IAS officers have average tenures of 18 months or less

Atul Thakur

The analysis used ER sheets of all 2,139 officers now in service who were selected through the UPSC's civil services exam and had completed 10 years or more of service on November 13, 2013, the date on which this analysis was undertaken.

Ashok Khemka has become famous as a much-transferred IAS officer, but he is far from being the only one to have been shunted ever so often. An analysis of the executive record (ER) sheets of thousands of IAS officers currently in service reveals that frequent transfers are depressingly common.

It shows that about two-thirds of the officers have had average tenures of 18 months or less. The analysis used ER sheets of all 2,139 officers now in service who were selected through the UPSC's civil services exam and had completed 10 years or more of service on November 13, 2013, the date on which this analysis was undertaken.

Among these officers, Vineet Chaudhary, a 1982 batch Himachal Pradesh cadre officer, has been transferred 52 times in 31 years, the highest in the country. Similarly, Assam-Meghalaya cadre officer Winston Mark Simon Pariat has been transferred 50 times in his 36-year career. Kusumjit Sidhu of the Punjab cadre witnessed 46 transfers in a career which spanned over three decades and like his famous colleague Khemka, Haryana cadre officer Keshni Anand Arora is also serving her 45th posting.

There are 13 officers who have undergone 40 or more transfers in their career. Interestingly, seven of these are from the Haryana cadre alone. Himachal Pradesh and Jharkhand have two such officers each while Assam-Meghalaya and Uttar Pradesh each one [IAS officer](#) with 40 or more transfers.

The number of transfers alone doesn't explain the difficulties of the prestigious job. It is the frequency which is more alarming. On this count too, Haryana emerges as the worst state for an IAS officer to be posted in. Five of the country's 10 most frequently transferred officers are from Haryana; two from Jharkhand and one each from Chhattisgarh, [UP](#) and Assam-Meghalaya.

Mohammed Shayin and Khemka - both Haryana cadre - are India's most frequently transferred IAS officers, their average frequency being more than once in six months. Similarly, the average time spent between two postings for M Ariz Ahammed, Shahla Nigar, Satyaprakash TL, Pankaj Yadav, Ritu Maheshwari and Rakesh Gupta has been less than seven months. Kailash Kumar Khandelwal and Sunil Kumar Barnwal, who also make it to the list of the country's 10 most frequently transferred officers, have been

transferred within seven months and seven days of posting, on an average.

Why does an IAS officer get transferred so frequently? Are honest officers more susceptible to transfers? When contacted by TOI, honorary secretary of the Central IAS association, Sanjay Bhoosreddy, answered in the affirmative and said, "Honest officers are not liked by some unscrupulous political masters, especially in the states, who are hand-in-gloves with the vested interests and try to weaken the organizational systems."

The UP cadre IAS officer, who had to face a series of punishment postings despite turning a loss-making state public sector undertaking into profits, further added that paradoxically even mass transfers and politically motivated transfers are done in the garb of public interest.

TOI's analysis suggests that roughly 14% officers get transferred within one year of service and another 54% within 18 months. In other words, 68%, or over two-thirds of India's top bureaucrats, last on an average less than 18 months at a posting. Only 8% of the officers analyzed had average tenures of more than two years and there are only 14 officers who have managed to complete an average stay of more than three years between transfers.

So how do the frequent transfers impact bureaucracy, the officials and the general public? "Frequent transfers impact the working of the system and demoralize the bureaucracy," says Bhoosreddy. "The family of the officer is the worst sufferer. It affects children's education and in many cases increases the financial burden as the transfers often cause job loss of the officer's spouse", he adds. He further argues that the poor and the vulnerable section is the worst hit as transfers severely impact welfare schemes. "Above all, the common man has to bear the burden of the additional administrative cost of transfer allowance," he says.

I-YEAR ITCH

Period of posting	% of officers
Within six months	0.1
6 months to 1 year	13.7
1 year to 18 months	54.2
18 months to two years	24.1
More than two years	7.9

MOST FREQUENTLY TRANSFERRED OFFICERS

Mohammed Shayin | Haryana

Avg stint: 5 mths 27 days

Ashok Khemka | Haryana

Avg stint: 5 mths 29 days

The 15th report of the Second Administrative Reforms Commission stated that appointments at the highest level of administration often lack transparency and objectivity. The report observed that transfers often coincide with a change in political regime. This leads to instability of administration and lack of faith in the system among the common people.

News reports have also repeatedly confirmed politically motivated transfers and today it is not unusual for ordinary people to associate a particular official with a politician or party. "Transfers with change in political executive are a reality after 1970s and this tendency is raising the question of neutrality of the bureaucracy", adds Bhoosreddy. Other sources, on condition of anonymity, told TOI that many times during a political vacuum between regimes, honest bureaucrats in senior positions get the chance to issue marching orders to corrupt subordinates.

A state-wise analysis of the frequency of [IAS transfers](#) once again shows that Haryana is the worst to work in. On an average, an IAS officer is transferred in 11 months and 25 days in the state. Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand and Punjab are other states that show up badly on this parameter. A bird's-eye view of state-wise transfer data suggests that states which are perceived as badly governed tend to be the ones where IAS transfers are more frequent.

Times View

If senior officers are routinely transferred within months of getting a posting, it is bound to have an adverse impact on their ability to do their job. In turn, this is bound to affect the quality of governance. This is exactly why both administrative reforms commissions and the Supreme Court have suggested fixed tenures for bureaucrats and of an independent body to deal with transfers, postings and promotions. Clearly, such a structure is necessary if political interference is not to completely cripple the bureaucracy's functioning. Of course, the elected government will have some say in the matter, but it must step in only when required for good governance, put on record the reasons why it is doing so, and the justification for such a step.

HINDU, JAN 1, 2013

Finance Department recommends 17 per cent IR to government staff

Amid high expectations of over 13-lakh State government employees and pensioners about getting interim relief (IR) as the New Year gift from Chief Minister N. Kiran Kumar Reddy, the Finance Department has reliably recommended the emolument much below their expectations.

The Chief Minister was expected to announce the IR before the dawn of New Year according to his assurance given to the representatives of employees' associations during his talks with them on December 28. However, there has been yawning gap between the employees' expectation and the government's proposal of IR.

Finance Minister Anam Ramanarayana Reddy and Chief Secretary P.K. Mohanty had a brief meeting with the Chief Minister in the latter's camp office on Tuesday night to discuss the issue.

Official sources stated that the Finance Department has recommended 17 per cent IR, citing the not-so-encouraging financial position of the government.

It is much below the 22 per cent IR announced before the last PRC recommendations were made.

Significantly, even the Chief Minister had stressed about decline in the revenue growth of the government for the last three years during the talks with employees.

Though the employees' bodies have been demanding 45 per cent to 55 per cent IR on paper they were expecting something above 30 per cent since 22 per cent was given last time, keeping in view the political ambitions of the Chief Minister in the wake of proposed bifurcation of the State.

EDUCATION

TRIBUNE, JAN 3, 2013

**Higher education set to get boost in state with new scheme
State Higher Education Council formed to improve curriculum
Vikas Sharma**

With the formation of State Higher Education Council (SHEC) in state, higher education is set to witness a boost. The new scheme will periodically review the statutes, ordinances and regulations of the universities in state.

It would also suggest appropriate improvements for realisation of the objectives of social justice and academic excellence or regulations for existing universities or other institutions of higher education.

Under Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), the state government had constituted the J&K State Higher Education Council (SHEC) headed by the Chief Minister as the chairman and Minister for Higher Education as the vice chairman on December 27.

The Council comprises 21 members, including Chief Secretary and administrative secretaries of Finance, Planning and Development Department.

Sources said SHEC has also been given the responsibility to evolve new concepts and programmes in higher education besides providing common facilities without affecting the autonomy of other institutions.

SHEC will work as an independent and autonomous body that would deal with the matters pertaining to the state and Central governments.

It would establish principles for funding institutions besides maintaining a databank on higher education and conduct research and evaluation studies.

Further, it will provide academic inputs to the government and to the universities, research institutions and other centres of higher education in the state for formulation and implementation of the policies and to evolve a perspective plan for its development.

The council will also give suggestions to bring improvements in curriculum and syllabi in accordance with the changing societal and academic requirements. It will also advise the government on the start of new courses, colleges and other higher education institutions in state.

Sources claimed that SHEC would ensure scholarships and financial assistance to the needy students and also coordinate in implementation of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and other eligible backward classes' welfare programmes of the Central and the state government and state-level funding agencies.

The plan that recommended strategic utilisation of central funds to ensure comprehensive planning at the state level, recommended a new Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) called RUSA.

The National Development Council approved the scheme as part of the 12th Plan and subsequently it was included in the list of 66 schemes approved by Union Cabinet on June 20, 2013 as part of restructured CSS for implementation in the 12th Plan.

How will council help

- The State Higher Education Council will help the government start new courses, colleges for state
- The council will review statutes, ordinances and regulations of the universities in state
- It will evolve new concepts and programmes, besides provide other facilities
- The SHEC will work as an independent and autonomous body

HINDU, JAN 6, 2014

Revived Nalanda varsity to start functioning by February-end

The revived Nalanda University, an international centre of learning coming up in Bihar, will be launching operations from later this year.

The first batch of students, faculty and staff would move by February-end to Rajgir, about 100 km from Patna, adjacent to where the sprawling international university is set to come up.

“We are taking hotels nearby, exploring all options,” an official source told IANS.

Nalanda University presently has 40 students or Nalanda fellows. Along with the faculty and staff, they would operate out of the temporary campus till the actual structure comes up. “The Bihar government has offered us the use of its Health Department office. The Bihar Chief Minister [Nitish Kumar] is personally monitoring the project,” the source added.

The University, an initiative of the Indian government and the 18 East Asia Summit (EAS) countries, is coming up around 12 km from the ruins of its ancient namesake that was flocked by thousands of scholars and thinkers from across the world till the 12th century. It was then destroyed by an invading Turkish army of Bakhtiyar Khilji, a general of Qutbuddin Aibak. It was set on fire by the invaders and the blaze in the huge library is believed to have raged for several days.

A boundary wall, around eight km, marks the 446-acre campus where the modern centre of excellence would come up. The residential university, due to be completed by 2020, would have seven schools — all for postgraduate and doctorate students.

The University has Nobel laureate Amartya Sen as its chairperson. The first batch of students would be enrolled for two post-graduate programmes in history and ecology and environmental studies. Last May, the Nalanda board had approved the architectural plan of the proposed university. “The government is fast-tracking the university,” said the source. The Nalanda University (Amendment) Bill 2013 was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on September 5, 2013, by the External Affairs Ministry and was referred to a Parliamentary Standing Committee. The Committee’s report was tabled in the Rajya Sabha during the December winter session of Parliament.

The Department of Expenditure has cleared the Rs. 2,700 crore cost for the University to be spent over 10 years. The approval of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs is now being sought.

The architectural design approved for the new university has proposed a massive lake at the centre of the campus. The library, a huge dome-shaped structure, would come up in the middle of the lake and be half-submerged.

China has already committed \$1 million for the project, Singapore has pledged \$5-6 million and Australia about \$1 million Australian dollars. All the funds have been committed on a voluntary basis. — IANS

The first batch of students would be enrolled for post-graduate programmes in history and ecology and environmental studies

The Department of Expenditure has cleared Rs. 2,700 crore to be spent over 10 years

TIMES OF INDIA, JAN 1, 2013

Free bus travel for girl students in Haryana from new year

Haryana is infamous for its skewed sex ratio. However, students of distance learning mode will not be get the benefit of the scheme.

CHANDIGARH: In a new year bonanza for girl students in Haryana, the state government will provide free travel facility to them in the state owned buses.

Free passes will be issued to all the girls of Haryana studying in various schools, colleges and institutes in the state and are recognised by the state government or are affiliated with any University or Board in the state, [transport minister Aftab Ahmed](#)said here today.

Haryana is infamous for its skewed sex ratio. However, students of distance learning mode will not be get the benefit of the scheme.

"The educational centres, coaching and study centres, distance learning centres and franchise centres of [HARTRON](#) and other centres which are affiliated with the universities of other states and are not recognised by the [Haryana Government](#) would not be covered under this policy," the minister said.

The passes will be issued for a maximum limit of 60 km on half-yearly basis on the recommendation of the authorities of the school, or college or institution.

The concerned school or college or institution would supply to the concerned Depot of Haryana Roadways a list of the girl students along with an attested copy of the recognition or affiliation certificate issued by the competent authority.

The passes will be issued by the respective General Manager or an officer designated by him as per the list supplied by the school, college or institution, he said.

ELECTIONS

ASIAN AGE, JAN 6, 2014

Lok Sabha elections to be held from mid-April

Bracing for the big exercise, the Election Commission is all set to hold Lok Sabha elections starting mid-April and spread it over at least five phases till early May.

The much-awaited announcement for the polls is likely to be made by the end of February or early March, for which work has already begun, top Commission sources said.

Along with the Lok Sabha polls, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha and Sikkim will go to polls to elect their new assemblies.

“The announcement of the poll schedule would be done in the last days of February or at best the first two-three days of March,” the sources told PTI.

Before the scheduled announcement, the Lok Sabha may meet for one last time to pass a vote-on-account budget to enable expenditure for six months of the new fiscal year 2014-15 to give time for the new Government to present a full-fledged budget in the next Parliament.

There is also speculation that a special session of Parliament may be convened shortly to pass anti-corruption measures by the government in the run up to the elections.

The term of the current Lok Sabha expires on June 1 and the new House has to be constituted by May 31.

The Commission is looking into the issue of whether to spread the elections over five phases or may be one more phase.

An estimated 80 crore voters will be eligible to vote in the coming elections after new voters have been added to the rolls, whose final revision is underway.

The Commission has already got the electoral rolls ready, except for some “health check-ups” to be made so that they are out before the end of this month, they said.

“We already have a list of electoral rolls. We need to update it. We expect that before January end, the lists will be ready,” a top EC official said.

LIBRARIES

ECONOMIC TIMES, JAN 3, 2014

The Eternal Library: Mumbai-based couple work towards eternalising libraries

So what are the kind of services they offer? The Eternal Library creates extremely personalised library systems.

They are from different backgrounds. [Ahalya Naidu](#) is an M.A. in English Literature and diploma in Journalism. She has been a former features writer and editor. Meethil [Momaya](#) holds a bachelor's degree in Mass Media and has been a professional wildlife photographer in the Indian jungles. It was their love for books that brought them together in marriage and profession and of course they attended a one-month long course in book publishing conducted by National Book Trust.

"I wanted to know how I could promote Indian wildlife through books and felt this course would give me a deeper understanding and better insight of the Indian (and international) publishing industry. During this course and my stay in Delhi, I learnt that publishers really don't have the money or the manpower to market their books across their target audience. And for the retailers, balancing their overheads and revenue, means they can only stock a certain number of books. The loser in this whole tug-of-war is the avid reader," said Mr Momaya one of the two founders of The Eternal Library, a Mumbai-based library services provider.

Ms Naidu stated as an independent book editor from 2007. She offers manuscript critique and editing services to publishers and writers. No, she is not an [agent](#). She also conducts creative writing workshops for children.

"When I started off as a book editor, I got a lot of queries from first-time writers from metros and small towns. I was asked a lot of questions about the Indian publishing industry and how it worked. Self-publishing hadn't caught on so much then. I spent all my time reading contemporary books; keeping up with news about books, publishing, reading trends, bookselling techniques, etc.; interacting with authors and publishers; visiting bookstores and libraries whenever I travelled so I could watch readers interact with books; interacting with children during my workshops and their parents to understand the realities about bringing up a young reader. During the National Book Trust course, I interacted with publishers in Delhi, and realised that they are not against libraries, they don't see libraries as enemies who take away potential book buyers," said Ms Naidu, adding, "In the meanwhile through her blog and a couple of tiny spots on radio I got the opportunity to talk about books, bookstores, and literary gems. I got a lot of feedback from listeners who were avid readers and via Facebook. I found my circle of avid readers widening, and based on the positive feedback I was getting, I began recommending books."

So what are the kind of services they offer? [The Eternal Library](#) creates extremely personalised library systems. The company can cater to various [categories](#) of clients

(individuals, hotels, corporates, smaller businesses, housing societies, any space where reading can be promoted), but even within the categories they may change the library's scope and collection to suit the client's requirements. "Our aim is to promote reading, introduce avid readers and busy people to the best books, and the books have to be relevant to the readers who frequent that space. This is where we come in, we study the space, understand who frequents it, and what kind of books would attract their attention. Once we have their attention, how can we boost their reading habit. A library has to evolve with each reader who uses it, else readers drop out," said Mr Momaya.

They sign up with the clients for an annual contract. They survey their interests and reading habits, help them decide a budget and draw up a procurement plan. "Before we buy books for the client we seek their approval by sending them a brief description of the books, once they approve of the books we buy it and send it to them. We don't usually send all the books at one time. Unless our client is setting up a new library and wants it done that way. We send new and relevant titles as and when they are released," he added.

OMBUDSMAN

FINANCIAL EXPRESS, JAN 2, 2014

Lokpal Bill gets President's nod

The much-awaited Lokpal Bill on Wednesday got assent from President Pranab Mukherjee, providing for creation of an anti-graft watchdog which will bring under its purview even the Prime Minister with certain safeguards.

The Bill was passed by the Rajya Sabha on December 17 and by the Lok Sabha the next day.

The Lok Sabha secretariat had on Tuesday sent to the law ministry a copy of the Bill which has been signed by Speaker Meira Kumar. The Bill was then forwarded to Rashtrapati Bhavan for the President's assent, official sources said.

The President has signed the Lokpal Bill, the sources added. The Bill takes the shape of the Act after being signed by the President and following certain procedures.

After assent by the President, the secretary of the legislative department in the law ministry will sign it and send it for publication in the official gazette.

The Bill aims to set up the institution of Lokpal at the Centre and Lokayuktas in states by law enacted by respective legislatures within one year of coming into force of the Act.

The Bill was first passed by the Lok Sabha at the end of the winter session of 2011, but not by the Rajya Sabha, where it was debated, but the house was adjourned before voting on it.

Later, a select committee of the Rajya Sabha had suggested changes in the Bill, most of which which were incorporated and approved by the Union Cabinet. Following the amendments, the Rajya Sabha had passed the bill.

The Lokpal had become a bone of contention between the ruling Congress, opposition BJP and the civil society, with each wanting to make changes in it to make it more effective.

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

STATESMAN, JAN 3, 2014

Aam Aadmi party wins trust vote

Delhi govt sails through, backed by Cong, JD-U and Independent MLAs; People's victory, says Kejriwal

KRITI NATH JHA

The Delhi Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader, Mr Arvind Kejriwal, today won a crucial trust vote in the state legislature, demonstrating that he has the support of 38 of Delhi's 70 legislators, a clear majority and can continue to govern the city-state.

"The people of Delhi have won today. AAP's next most important agenda will be to pass the Janlokpall Bill for Delhi," Mr Kejriwal said after winning the trust vote.

AAP won the confidence motion, moved by the AAP leader and education minister, Mr Manish Sisodia, with the support of eight legislators of the Congress, the lone Janata Dal (United) member Shoaib Iqbal and an Independent, Ramvir Singh Shoukeen.

The BJP's 31 law-makers and its ally, the Akali Dal, opposed the motion. In his 25-minute speech to close the debate on his trust motion, Mr Kejriwal said: "I have not stood up here to save a government... we want swaraaj, the people's rule, in Delhi."

The chief minister stressed that his government will probe all corruption charges and would spare none of the corrupt.

Mr Kejriwal made it clear that his intention was to work for the common people and the motion of confidence if passed favourably will help the ordinary citizen living in the national capital. "AAP believes that all people who need an honest system are common men no matter wherever they stay ~ Greater Kailash or Sangan Vihar. People who are dishonest either rich or poor are the special ones. I haven't stood here to save the government or make a government. I never thought that I will form a political party and fight elections. I am just a common man with no standing. A common man in India wants his children to get good education, safety for his family and a good judiciary. Crores of rupees have been spent for development but where is the development and where is the money? A common man wants to know that. Sadly, politics has been corporatised in India today," Mr Kejriwal said.

Earlier, the leader of the Opposition, Dr Harsh Vardhan, took on Mr Kejriwal and the AAP government over taking support from the Congress. He rubbished the free water scheme as benefiting only a few and was also critical of the power subsidy. He dismissed Mr Kejriwal's metro ride on the day he took oath as CM as a mere gimmick.

The leader of the Congress Legislature Party, Mr Arvinder Singh Lovely, while assuring his party's support to AAP if it delivered on its manifesto promises, criticised the government on the issue of water and power. The CM said: "Our fight is to end corruption and we are here today. Our fight looked impossible and victory was a distant dream. For us 28 in the Delhi Assembly, God in whatever form he is, is with us. Today's question is who are the members who are with the Aam Aadmi."

Mr Kejriwal wondered whether a common man's time is not as valuable as a minister's. "I have waited at red signals and lost no time in the last five-six days. Why does a political leader need security? The day God decides that you should not get any more security, no amount of bodyguards will be able to save you," declared the Chief Minister.

Mr Kejriwal said while he agreed with the Leader of the Opposition Dr Harsh Vardhan, that Delhi already has a Lokayukta, it was very weak and a stronger Ombudsman was needed.

On the criticism that only a small section of the city's population will be benefited by AAP's free water announcement, Mr Kejriwal said: "In case of free water, if a section is benefited to start with what is the harm? Has a good thing not been done?"

The CM pitched for full statehood for Delhi. He said there should be an audit of the power distribution firms and everybody must sit together and fix the power tariff.

"We need to look into unauthorised colonies as these are devoid of basic facilities. These facilities should be given until a permanent solution is found. Same stands for illegal shanties. The contractors are also a tormented lot as their PFs are cut but not deposited into their accounts. This must stop," Mr Kejriwal said. On FDI in retail, he said the AAP opposes it. He pointed out that the BJP too opposes it. "Why does the government look upon the business community as thieves? Ninety-nine per cent of them are honest and are ready to pay tax."

HINDUSTAN TIMES, JAN 1, 2013

Why AAP is going the wrong way

I wish the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) well. North India has never seen such a thing as the AAP, which has won a major election without a caste base. Chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's movement has triumphed on the strength of issues and a new philosophy of governance.

The AAP's belief,

briefly put, is that the system is bad, and that the people are good. Politicians are mostly bad, but even when they are good, the system is so bad that it corrupts them.

This is how Kejriwal described it in an interview after his victory: "If we think that we can provide good governance in the present system, that's not possible. The system will soon overpower us and we will get sucked into it. So, we will have to change the system completely and for that our solution is Swaraj."

We'll come to Swaraj later, first let's examine his diagnosis of the problem in India.

There are two examples Kejriwal often uses to arrive at his 'people are good, system is bad' theory. The first is the behaviour of Indians abroad, where they pay their taxes and behave in traffic, and the second is that of Indians not littering the Delhi Metro.

In the first instance, Kejriwal assumes that it is fear of punitive action that ensures compliance. If they can do this elsewhere, they can be made to do this everywhere in Delhi. The solution is, therefore, to be found in politics and governance.

Perhaps this diagnosis is true of the Indian abroad, but it cannot be said to be true of the foreign population he is amid. It is not fear of the State that coerces the American or the Japanese into paying his taxes, not misbehaving in traffic and not littering. It is the idea that he is part of a society towards which he is responsible. The rule of law in those parts comes from the consent of the governed.

If I remember it right, Kejriwal himself paid his own taxes tardily and after a stern notice.

The second example, that of Delhiwallahs behaving on their Metro and not littering, is echoed elsewhere. For instance, Indians in five-star hotels and on airplanes. It is true that these are not littered by us and the reason is, as Kejriwal concludes, that we are conscious of how we are perceived in these places. And also that we are proud of them.

But if this sentiment does not extend to our neighbourhoods, is the State responsible? This seems the incorrect conclusion to draw, and the solution here doesn't appear to reside in the State but in society.

But having diagnosed the problem in this manner, Kejriwal and the AAP then arrive at a solution. In Kejriwal's words, the AAP will "have to implement a system that no longer depends on individuals but works by itself. Why do we have to approach MLAs for ration cards, cleaning waste or improving roads? These things should happen on their own. When there is decentralisation, when governance is in the hands of the people, at least colony-related issues like water, power, parks, medicines and schools will get solved."

This will also take care of corruption, because the politician is bad but the people are good. The idea that they should be allowed to legislate and govern themselves is what the AAP calls Swaraj. Here is how Kejriwal says it will be implemented: "Delhi has 272 wards. Each will be divided into an average of 10 parts. That gives us roughly 2,720

mohallas. Demarcating the mohallas on the map will be a huge exercise. Assets like roads, lanes, dispensaries, primary schools, etc, will have to be transferred to each mohalla. Each mohalla will have a small secretariat with one or two employees after which there will be local [elections](#) to chose a representative. His only job will be to convene monthly meetings and to get decisions implemented through the local mohalla sabha secretariat. This entire exercise should take us six to eight months."

Direct democracy, as the AAP sees it, is actually democracy's oldest form. Aristotle described it in his work, *The Athenian Constitution*. Basically, every decision, whether executive or legislative, was taken locally by direct vote.

Athens was a direct democracy because with only 50,000 citizens, it had little diversity and was manageably small. But even there, since it wasn't practical for all citizens to vote every day, only a few voted on a given day. These were chosen by lot (picking out a number or a colour from a pot) and by neighbourhood in rotation. Every citizen was equal and equally qualified.

Aristotle described how government servants, military generals and court jurors (there were no judges) were elected and picked randomly by lot.

Socrates had a problem with this. "In a storm, would you decide a ship's captain by lot?" is his constant question in Plato's dialogues. The answer is obviously no.

Plato detested direct democracy as much as Socrates did. He had no faith in the mob's wisdom. His work *The Republic* dreams up a State that was the opposite of direct democracy.

Direct democracy is also susceptible to demagoguery and the passion of the mob, which is quick to form in India. The comic playwright Aristophanes had a favourite target, the demagogue Cleon, who kept pressing Athens into continuing its ruinous war with Sparta.

Will India resist her Cleons, of whom it has many? The evidence suggests otherwise. Gujarat's voters continue to cleave to a party whose ministers are being convicted of mass slaughter.

The khap panchayat is a very local, very democratic institution. Is it better at arriving at good decisions? According to the AAP philosophy, yes.

As the AAP ministers experience power and figure out what is going on, they will find the system compromised for several reasons. Among them will be a lack of resources and a slippage of rules that has come in time because of the chaotic environment the system operates in.

Systems, especially those that work efficiently in other nations, are rarely in themselves good or bad. If they are seen to have failed the diagnosis must be sought elsewhere.

The sweeping change of the sort Kejriwal seeks is to be found in society and not in politics or the State. It is there that the solution ultimately resides. And it is because of this that the AAP movement, noble and well-intentioned, but incorrectly aligned, will founder.

Aakar Patel is a former Gujarati newspaper editor and a columnist for Mint
The views expressed by the author are personal

HINDU, JAN 1, 2013

The topi became the crown

The journey from learned helplessness to empowerment is a one-way street. Once empowered, the people cannot go back to feeling helpless or powerless

Vox populi:

The Aam Aadmi Party has sent out key messages aimed at alleviating the powerlessness that large sections of Indians feel in the face of corruption. Making the common man feel heard has been its prime agenda.— Photo: PTI

As the leader of the Aam Aadmi Party, Arvind Kejriwal was sworn in as Chief Minister of Delhi on December 28, 2013. Of the lakhs of voters in Delhi who gave such a strong mandate to a fledgling party, or the hundreds of thousands of supporters across India and the globe who participated in this struggle and made this happen, the emotion was jubilation, exhilaration and a feeling of having made the “near impossible” happen. Others who were on the fence and earlier doubtful that a new party with such impractical ideals of transparency and accountability could make any serious inroads into the entrenched political game of money and muscle, will be feeling a grudging admiration and a feeling of “wow, not quite sure how they pulled this off but these people are certainly worth taking seriously”. Many such people are flocking in large numbers to join this political revolution as this wave for clean politics sweeps across the nation. The emotion in corridors of administrative offices in Delhi where corruption was an accepted everyday phenomenon may surely be one of trepidation and unease as they see their bastions of power crumbling and an uncertain fate ahead. There are media reports of files being shredded and tossed and officials scrambling to get transfers out of Delhi.

So, how did such a transformative change happen in such a short period of time, defying all conventional political wisdom? This is the question on the lips of many as they scratch their heads in wonder. What was the secret recipe for success in the stunning victory of the AAP? Even political opponents, established parties such as the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party, are doing some soul-searching and taking lessons from this turn of events. Rahul Gandhi himself has acknowledged that the Congress will need to learn from the AAP.

What was the goal that the AAP had set out to achieve? To first rid Delhi of corruption and then do the same for the rest of the country. Their slogan or “mantra” was “A corruption-free India is not our request, but our demand and obsession”. Go to their

website and this is the first message that greets you. There is clarity and firmness of purpose here.

But why should this be so difficult to achieve? Are not most people in India on the receiving end of corruption and only a small fraction beneficiaries of it? So, why should it be difficult to correct this state of affairs in the world's largest democracy? Would not every Indian naturally want this and vote for clean politics? What forces had created a system where only the corrupt could survive in politics and people are forced to choose between the lesser of two evils? Was it that those indulging in corruption were really smart and hid their tracks and fooled the people most of the time? That does not seem too plausible in an environment where mega corruption scandals are exposed with alarming frequency and skeletons tumble out of the closet as an everyday occurrence. So, what was it that was causing this state of affairs to continue? What forces were keeping this system from moving to the desired state of a corruption-free country?

Removing barriers

Experts in change management talk of two ways that you can make change happen. By putting in place “drivers” that create a force towards the desired future state or removing “barriers” that prevent a system from moving to the desired future state. In fact, it's often easier to change a system by removing “barriers” rather than putting in place “drivers”. The desire of a majority of Indians for a corruption-free country was a “driving” force for change, but at the same time there was a sense of helplessness or powerlessness, a belief that it's the way it is and nothing can change it, that became a key barrier to this change. Removing this barrier was critical to allow the system to change.

Psychologists have studied the phenomenon of “learned helplessness”, where people who have been put in a prolonged situation where they are unable to get results from their actions, give up trying, and thereafter, helplessness becomes a learned behaviour. I would venture to say that large segments of Indians had succumbed to the phenomenon of learned helplessness, and felt powerless to change the state of affairs regarding corruption in the country. That being the case, a central task for the AAP was to undo this sense of helplessness and make people feel empowered to rise up and fight for change. A lot of key messages of the party were aimed at this.

The very name of the party created this sense of empowerment. It made every Indian who donned the *Aam Aadmi Party* (AAP) feel that they were the party — that they owned the party. The *topi* became the crown that made them feel like the king of the party.

Central messages of the party also built on this feeling of empowerment. “*Theaam Aadmi* will go to Parliament and clean corruption”, “the *aam Aadmi* will be selected as a candidate”, “*theaam Aadmi* has won from this constituency and will live not as a minister but as *anaam Aadmi* rejecting the trappings of a VIP political culture”.

Not only did *theaam Aadmi* feel empowered, he felt heard. The tragedy of Indian politics in the past several decades since Independence has been the growing irrelevance of

the *aam aadmi* and his troubles and woes. Politics became a game of buying and manipulating votes to win elections and then driving the very people who voted for you into a corner, extorting from them through any unfair and corrupt means, and making their lives difficult. The AAP's door-to-door campaign made the *aam aadmi* feel heard and empowered, as did the Mohalla Sabhas of the AAP to create Assembly manifestos. Even the decision to form the government in Delhi was taken to the *aam aadmi* in one of the largest referendum exercises in politics. Even while the Opposition scoffed at this, it struck a chord with the *aam aadmi*. If any other political party wants to learn lessons from the AAP, they need to learn the ABC of empowerment.

How long will the euphoria last?

As we celebrate this moment that may very well be remembered in the years to come as the turning point that changed the trajectory of India's development and made the common man relevant, many are also asking the question, how long will this last? How long will the Congress allow this government of the people to continue? How long before the corrupt forces band together and strike it down?

My answer to this question is that the journey from learned helplessness to empowerment is a one-way street. It cannot go backwards. Once empowered, the people cannot go back to feeling helpless or powerless. The people of India have woken up; they feel empowered and will not settle for less any more. They will demand clean candidates, they will demand transparent political funding, and they will demand that money be spent on the needs of the *aam aadmi*. They will insist on their voice being heard and participating in the political process. Hail to the power of the people in the world's largest democracy!

(The writer is an organisation development consultant in Chicago and has been coordinating the AAP Global supporter group)

The very name of the AAP led every Indian who donned the cap to feel like they were the king of the party

POWER INDUSTRY

DECCAN HERALD, JAN 2, 2013

Delhi govt orders CAG audit of pvt power companies

Rejecting the contention of private power distributors, the Delhi government today ordered a CAG audit of their finances, fulfilling yet another election promise of the Aam Aadmi Party.

"We have ordered an audit of the private power distribution companies. The CAG has said it will do the audit," Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal told reporters after a meeting of the Cabinet which took the decision on audit.

He said the Lt Governor's order on the audit of the companies will go to the CAG tomorrow. "From tomorrow, the audit will begin," he said.

The Delhi Government had given time to the three companies -- BSES Yamuna Power Ltd, BSES Rajdhani Power Ltd and Tata Power Delhi Distribution Ltd -- till this morning to give their views on why there should not be a CAG audit of their companies.

Asked what the companies have told government, Kejriwal said they had given numerous reasons but not one reason why the audit should not be done.

"Nobody has given any reason why there should not be an audit," he said adding the auditing will cover from the days the power distribution was privatised.

He also rejected the view that the matter was subjudiced and the decision cannot be taken. "The matter has been in the High Court and proceedings are on. No stay has been granted. Even now the proceedings can go on."

On complaints about the defective quality of power meters, the Chief Minister said the government would approach IIT Delhi and Delhi College of Engineering for suggestion to improve the quality of meters.

TELEGRAPH, JAN 6, 2013

POWER SHORTAGE

There is little action from the Centre and states on electricity

Commentarao: S.L. Rao

Electricity in India has grown enormously. As it has grown, especially in the 1990s, it was also increasingly badly managed. The important reasons were the dominance of government ownership, control and management, and the complete absence of competition. While government investment without much commercial calculation rapidly expanded the system, it failed in other ways. As the sector grew, investments and revenues shot up, government ownership led to political meddling in tariff setting,

employment in the operating companies, and the growing role of administrators in managing electricity enterprises.

By the early part of this century, State-owned distribution enterprises were losing vast sums of money. These losses were a charge on the state government budgets and diverted funds from building physical and social infrastructure, routine maintenance, renovation, modernization and investment for fresh capacities. Losses occurred due to free or below-cost supplies to poor and vulnerable groups in the state, excessive staffing, undisciplined staff, and collusion in theft. Beneficiaries of populist sops were not clearly identified. Many undeserving and thieving staff, benefited instead. Free or low-cost power to farmers was, without ensuring it, used only for irrigation. There was no limit on the number of pump-sets for which a farmer could get free power. There was no measurement or limit on the power supplied and consumed. What was shown as power consumed by agriculture included a lot that was actually stolen by other consumers, or concealed by the distribution enterprises under agriculture to hide their inability to prevent thefts.

The transmission and distribution systems were poorly managed, with ageing equipment and declining maintenance. Employees of the distribution enterprises colluded in thefts, hidden under normal transmission and distribution losses. While technical losses, as electricity went on the wires, should at worst be 8 per cent or so, they were as much as 55 per cent in some states, and not much less in many others. Government ownership led to a lack of interest in efficiency and loss of employee integrity, since losses would be at the cost of the state budget. If these enterprises had been commercial enterprises, they would have been declared as bankrupt years ago.

Government ownership also led to favouring government-owned enterprises. For example, when the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission was formed in 1998, the National Thermal Power Corporation was earning large sums as incentive on plant load factors in generating plants at above 64 per cent. In fact, the average was around 80 per cent, so NTPC was earning hundreds of crores for no fresh improvement, at the expense of the consumer, from these unwarranted incentives. Similarly, NTPC was granted “accelerated depreciation”, which added to consumer tariffs. Though meant to help service loans, NTPC had enough cash generation to keep this extra cash flow to itself. In many cases, tariffs determined by the regulators were prevented from being given effect to by the owner state governments.

State governments (as in Karnataka) asked for the postponement of the annual maintenance of generating plants, so that power supply would not be affected before elections. This damaged expensive equipment and led to a decline in generation in later years.

The poor maintenance of transmission lines in Uttar Pradesh, for example, was a reason for the collapse of the Northern Grid in 1999. The control over load-dispatch centres by Central and state governments resulted in government interference in protecting favoured suppliers or consumers. Such actions had adverse consequences on the national grid. A

good example was the twin grid collapses in much of India in 2012. The load-dispatch centres that should have disconnected overdrawing states did not do so. These states voted for the Centre in Parliament.

If regulatory commissions in the states had been truly independent, they would have prevented many of these abuses. They would have asked for and monitored maintenance schedules. They would have monitored thefts and ensured severe penalties on thieves. They would have made electricity enterprises to discipline erring employees. They would have ensured the independent functioning of load-dispatch centres. They would have insisted that tariff orders should be obeyed by the distribution enterprises. They would have prevented government enterprises from being favoured.

The culprits for the dismal state of the availability and its quality of power in India, the financial disasters in distribution enterprises, the drain on state-government finances because of losses by electricity enterprises, the lack of investment in power in India despite a vast and growing demand, are well known. The causes are government ownership, particularly by state governments of distribution enterprises, the submissiveness and lack of understanding of their duties among regulatory commissions, the separation of fuels (also largely under government ownership and management), electricity enterprises as government departments under administrative officers, and similarly with regulatory commissions. State governments will not reform electricity. The Centre makes pious appeals but bails out state governments. Some years ago, this was by Rs 40,000 crore, and now by Rs 1,40,000 crore, to meet the accumulated losses in distribution.

In 1994, the government opened the generation of electricity to private, including foreign, investment. Domestic investment came in, but has now been put off by the weakness of the purchasing state governments, who are unable to pay for what they buy, and the inability of Coal India to supply contracted coal and of Reliance Industries to supply gas. The two foreign investors were Cogentrix, who made an exit after some years because of the environmentalists, and the unfortunate Enron, which set up a white elephant in Dabhol, still an albatross around India's financial neck. In 1998, both transmission and distribution were opened to private investment. The Central-government-owned Power Grid Corporation held up permissions to private transmission investors for seven years. The only private investments in distribution were in Odisha and Delhi. The latter transformed the power situation in Delhi, but has heavy ammunition being thrown at it by do-gooding aspiring politicians.

The awakening of CERC, of the Central government, and of the Appellate Tribunal for Electricity has resulted in some action that might postpone the imminent collapse of the power system. The ATE has ordered state regulatory commissions to review mandatorily (as the law requires) electricity tariffs by a given date each year. The CERC has initiated power trading, power exchanges, rationalized transmission charges, enabled private investments in transmission, and is considering how to review tariffs on projects for which long-term tariffs were agreed but where costs have gone far beyond anticipation. The Central government has introduced measures to improve supplies of coal, and is

struggling to do the same for natural gas, the unavailability of which, despite promises, has resulted in the stranded capacity of around 15,000 mega watts of generating capacity with an investment of around Rs 75,000 crore. The Central government has floated draft bills to bring better practices to the sector: to enable the renegotiation of tariffs in long-term contracts; and to standardize functions and powers of regulatory commissions.

Distribution is a state subject under the Constitution, and the Centre's draft bill on it has to be legislated by each state government. It is the model state electricity distribution management responsibility bill 2013. It is really a bill that is a treatise on managing distribution enterprises, instead of privatizing them or professionalizing their management. Many of its clauses should have been unperformed normal duties of state regulatory commissions. The bill says nothing about putting career professionals in charge of distribution enterprises, privatizing them, selecting and appointing truly independent regulators. State governments are unlikely to legislate this bill, limited time will prevent Parliament from considering it.

Neither Central nor state governments seem to want to take the necessary actions to prevent India from declining because of electricity shortages. Twenty years after beginning reform of the electricity sector, there are only stop-gap measures, not permanent solutions. There is little urgency to save the most critical element for economic growth.

The author is former director general, National Council of Applied Economic Research

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

BUSINESS LINE, JAN 2, 2013

Bengal Governor to launch administrative calendar

West Bengal Governor, M.K. Narayanan is likely to visit the new State secretariat, Nabanna, on January 2 to launch the State's first-ever administrative calendar. This incidentally, will be the first time that a Governor will visit the State secretariat.

The new State secretariat was inaugurated as a makeshift arrangement earlier in 2013 after the Government decided to move out of Writers' Buildings. Repair work is being undertaken at Writers' Buildings, the State Government's original seat of administration post Independence.

The administrative calendar is a charter of the work proposed to be executed by the Government in each district. It will also have the targeted completion date.

Confirming the development, the Trinamool Congress website claims that it was a "historical visit". "Such an event is not heard of even in the British colonial era," the website claims.

(This article was published in the Business Line print edition dated January 2, 2014)

RAILWAYS

HINDU, JAN 1, 2013

New system to halt train in case of fire

Against the backdrop of death of 26 people due to fire in a train last week, Railways on Tuesday said it is testing a new technology that will bring train to halt automatically in case of smoke.

The technology has been introduced in Jammu Rajdhani Express. "The technology has been provided by an Australian company and has cost around Rs 51 lakh to introduce it in the train," Railway Board Chairman Arunendra Kumar said.

While the Railways was testing with an earlier technology in Bhubaneswar Rajdhani, Mr. Kumar said it did not prove successful as it sent "dummy alarm".

As per the plan, 30 rakes comprising 750 coaches having the new technology have been sanctioned and the coaches will be rolled out from Railway Coach Factory Kapurthala.

It will be a four-layer alarm system and will be integrated with the breaking system. The train will come to a halt the moment the emergency breaking system is activated on detection of fire.

Twenty six people were charred to death when an AC coach of Bangalore-Nanded Express caught fire on December 28 near Anantpur in Andhra Pradesh.

The mishap was not an isolated one as Railways has had a history of similar type of incident earlier also. Seven persons were burnt to death in November 2011 when a coach of Howrah-Dehradun Express caught fire. The fire spread to another coach and both were badly burnt.

URBAN DEVELOPMENT

HINDU, JAN 1, 2013

NDMC area residents can now get building plans sanctioned online

Residents of the New Delhi Municipal Council area can now go online to get their building plans sanctioned or to get information regarding pending applications. The civic body's chairperson Jalaj Shrivastava said the new system that was launched on Tuesday will add to transparency in the system besides minimising procedural time.

Easy checking of approvals will also reduce possible corruption, he added. The file can also be seen by department officials, architects and citizens at any point of time. The link to the new system can be accessed through the NDMC web site:<https://ndmc.gov.in>

'System will add to transparency in the system besides minimising procedural time'

WATER SUPPLY

HINDU, JAN 1, 2013

Water priorities for urban India

The Twelfth Five Year Plan has proposed a paradigm shift in water management in India. One of our key proposals relates to urban water. In many ways, it could be said that the crisis of water and sanitation in urban India is even graver than in our rural areas.

The Twelfth Plan focusses on a strategy that is both affordable and sustainable. We believe that Indian cities and industries need to find ways to grow with minimal water and minimal waste. As important as the quantum of water is the problem of its management and equitable supply. In most cities, water supply is sourced from long distances and the length of the pipeline determines the costs, including costs of pumping. In the current water supply system, there are enormous losses in the distribution system because of leakages and bad management. And equally important are the huge challenges posed by the fact that water is divided very unequally within cities.

As per the National Sample Survey (NSS) 65th round, only 47 per cent of urban households have individual water connections. Currently, it is estimated that as much as 40 to 50 per cent of the water is “lost” in the distribution system. Electricity to pump water is anywhere between 30 to 50 per cent of what most cities spend on their water supply. As the distance increases, the cost of building and then maintaining the water pipeline and its distribution network also rises. And if the network is not maintained, then water losses increase. The end result is that the government finds it impossible to subsidise the supply of water to all and, therefore, does not deliver water as needed. The poor are typically the worst affected as they have to spend a great deal of time and money to obtain water since they do not have house connections.

Contamination and costs

Even as cities worry about water, they need to focus on the waste this water will generate. Sewage invariably goes into streams, ponds, lakes and rivers of a town, polluting waterworks, and health is compromised. Alternatively, it goes into the ground, contaminating the same water used by people for drinking. It is no surprise then that surveys of groundwater are finding higher and higher levels of microbiological contamination — a sign of sewage contamination. This compounds the deadly and costly spiral. As surface water or groundwater gets contaminated, a city has no option but to hunt for newer sources of its supply. Its search becomes more extensive and as the distance increases, the cost of pumping and supply increases.

Sewerage systems and urban India

The 2011 Census reveals that only 32.7 per cent of urban Indians are connected to a piped sewerage system and 12.6 per cent — roughly 50 million urban Indians — still defecate in the open. Large parts of our cities remain unconnected to the sewerage system

as they live in unauthorised or illegal areas or slums, where the state services do not reach. In this situation, it is important we invest in sewerage systems, but it is even more critical that we invest in building affordable and scalable sewerage networks, which requires a fresh look at the current technology for sewage and its treatment. If sewerage systems are not comprehensively spread across a city to collect, convey and intercept waste of all its inhabitants, then pollution will not be under control. Currently, according to estimates of the Central Pollution Control Board, the country has an installed capacity to treat only about 30 per cent of the excreta it generates. Just two cities, Delhi and Mumbai, which generate around 17 per cent of the country's sewage, have nearly 40 per cent of the country's installed capacity. What is worse, some of these plants do not function because of high recurring costs (electricity and chemicals) and others because they do not have enough sewage to treat. In most cities, only a small (unestimated) proportion of sewage is transported for treatment. And if the treated sewage — transported in official drains — is allowed to be mixed with the untreated sewage — transported in unofficial and open drains — then the net result is pollution.

The added problem is that the location of the hardware — the sewage treatment plant — is not designed to dispose of the treated effluent so that it actually cleans the waterbody. Most cities don't seem to think of this factor when they build their infrastructure for sewage. They build a sewage treatment plant where there is land. The treated sewage is then disposed of, as conveniently as possible, invariably into a drain.

Reuse and recycling

Nothing less than a paradigm shift is required in the Twelfth Plan if we are to move towards sustainable solutions to urban water and waste management. Investments in water supply must focus on demand management, reducing intra-city inequity and on the quality of water supplied. This will require cities to plan to cut distribution losses through bulk water meters and efficiency drives. User charges should plan to cover increasing proportions of operation and maintenance (O&M) costs, while building in equity by providing a “lifeline” amount of water free of charge, with higher tariffs for increasing levels of use.

Each city must consider, as the first source of supply, its local waterbodies. Therefore, cities must only get funds for water projects, when they have accounted for the water supply from local waterbodies and have protected these waterbodies and their catchments. This precondition will force protection and build the infrastructure, which will supply locally and then take back sewage also locally. It will cut the length of the pipeline twice over — once to supply and the other to take back the waste.

No water scheme will be sanctioned without a sewage component. Planning for “full coverage and costs” will lead cities to look for unconventional methods of treating waste. For instance, cities would then consider treatment of sewage in open drains and treatment using alternative biological methods of wastewater treatment. Biological methods of wastewater treatment introduce contact with bacteria, which feed on the organic materials in the wastewater, thereby reducing its Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) content.

Through their metabolism, the organic material is transformed into cellular mass, which is no longer in solution but can be precipitated at the bottom of a settling tank or retained as slime on solid surfaces or vegetation in the system. The water exiting the system is much clearer than the one that entered it. The principle has to be to cut the cost of building the sewerage system, cut the length of the sewerage network and then to treat the waste as a resource — turn sewage into water for irrigation or use in industry. Indian cities have the opportunity to leapfrog into new ways of dealing with excreta, which are affordable and sustainable, simply because they have not yet built the infrastructure.

Cities must plan for reuse and recycling of waste at the very beginning of their water and waste plans and not as an afterthought. It is also clear that cities must think through the plan for reuse for affordability and sustainability. The diverse options for reuse must be factored in for: use in agriculture, recharge of waterbodies, gardening, and industrial and domestic uses. In each case, the treatment plan will be different. But in all cases, the treated effluent will improve the hydrological cycle. It will return water and not waste to the environment. While a larger sewage treatment plant affords economies of scale in operation, a plant fitted to size — collecting the waste of a group of houses, an institution or even colonies — may have higher costs of operations, but there are substantial savings in the piping and pumping cost.

Free water agenda

Since groundwater is the single most important source of water in India today, the Twelfth Plan has launched an ambitious aquifer mapping and management programme. The aquifers in each city need to be mapped and participatory, while sustainable and equitable arrangements for groundwater management need to be worked out in a very location-specific manner.

In the light of this massive reform proposed in the Twelfth Plan, it is somewhat disappointing to see the zeal being shown by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) to rush into the 666 litres free water agenda. Indeed, this raises the alarming prospect of further disadvantaging the already deprived sections of Delhi who get no piped water at all. The AAP manifesto itself has a much more nuanced understanding of water issues in Delhi. The manifesto clearly acknowledges that over 30 per cent of Delhi's residents do not get tap water in their homes. It also recognises that 17 lakh households do not have access to safe sanitation. The loss of revenue from freebies to those already getting water could end up pushing the unconnected even further down the deprivation ladder. It is to be hoped that the AAP will reconsider its water priorities, taking both the Twelfth Plan and its own manifesto more seriously.

(Mihir Shah is Member, Planning Commission, Government of India.)

The Aam Aadmi Party's proposal of

666 litres of free water a day raises

the alarming prospect of further disadvantaging the already deprived sections of Delhi who get no piped water at all

BUSINESS LINE, JAN 2, 2013

Is free water supply bad economics?

A. NARAYANAMOORTHY

Free water will encourage wastage and inefficiency.

“It is the duty of any responsible government to provide lifeline water to its citizens. We may debate the quantum, but can we argue against the principle?” This is what Arvind Kejriwal, the newly elected Chief Minister of Delhi, tweeted immediately after announcing 666 liters of free water per day (or 20 kilolitres of water a month) to every household connected with a metre.

Is this move economically viable for the Delhi Jal Board (DJB)? Is it necessary to provide free water supply to every household? Since Delhi does not have any reliable perennial water source, where will the water come from?

JAL BOARD FINANCES

Water is increasingly becoming an economic good worldwide because of its storage and distribution costs. Rainwater is harvested in dams and reservoirs to be supplied for various purposes, including domestic use, which involves huge cost.

At the same time, groundwater is exploited at an alarming rate; it also involves huge drilling and electricity costs. The cost of management and distribution of water for urban households is massive.

Why provide water free to all households when the per capita income of this State is much higher than the national average? Is it not against the ability to pay principle? This free scheme reportedly is going to cost about Rs 160 crore per annum at current prices for the DJB and is expected to increase manifold for a variety of reasons. How is DJB to manage this cost?

According to one estimate, the DJB’s net cash revenue surplus increased from Rs 40.56 crore in 2007-08 to Rs 233.57 crore during 2013-14. DJB’s dependence on the government for operational costs reduced from Rs 380 crore in 2009-10 to zero in 2013-14, a remarkable achievement. The financial condition of DJB will now run into a mess.

Delhi does not have the luxury of a perennial surface source of water. It needs water from the neighbouring State of Haryana which is guaranteed. Haryana’s Chief Minister Bhupendra Singh Hooda has already cautioned that Delhi is getting more than its due share.

Besides, the groundwater stock is precarious in the State. As per the estimate of Central Ground Water Board, the total annual replenishable groundwater resource is only 0.30

BCM (billion cubic metres) for Delhi, but the draft of groundwater is already 0.48 BCM/year, which is way above the permissible limit. Owing to the increased scarcity of water, the present supply of water even in posh areas is only about 509 litres per household per day, below the promise made by this new government.

Therefore, there is no guarantee that the Delhi government will be able to provide the promised supply of water to all households. Considering the increased scarcity of water, is it necessary to provide free supply of water to all households? Will it not aggravate water scarcity during summer? This scheme pronounces that if a household consumes more than 20 kilo litres of water, it will have to pay for the entire water consumed with 10 per cent additional charges. How will this work? Who will monitor this? Will it not encourage consumers to tamper meters?

In most cities, the domestic consumption of water is not monitored as it involves considerable transaction cost. Delhi reportedly has a pipeline network of 14,000 km with about 68 per cent households having a piped connection. If this new scheme tries to measure the consumption of water by meter, will it not increase the operation and management cost?

A recent CAG report underlines that “the Delhi Jal Board has neither a proper system to measure the water supply to different areas nor does it have access to reliable data on population in different areas”. It, therefore, cannot ensure equitable supply of water.

If this Government is serious about improving the plight of poor people, it should provide free water only to those households which are identified as economically poor.

It is proved beyond doubt that free supply of any good to consumers will result in inefficiency. Water cannot be an exception. There is ample evidence to prove from different states that the free supply of electricity to farm sector over the years has not only increased the exploitation of groundwater but also created financial mess in many State electricity boards.

DRAWING LESSONS

A UN estimate suggests that each person needs 20-50 litres of water per day for drinking, cooking and cleaning. If this is so, the supply of water to the tune of close to 700 litres per household per day will surely increase inefficiency.

Delhi must draw lessons from the Amravati and Malkapur regions of Maharashtra. These regions provide water supply to all of its residents through skilful water use efficiency and lower per capita consumption.

McKinsey Global Institute had underlined that Delhi could experience the biggest increase in water demand from 2010 to 2025 because of fast urban agglomeration. This means the capital cost requirement for managing the amplified water demand will increase. How will the State generate resources with free supply of water?

Therefore, the present Government must rethink on its policy of providing free water supply to all households and instead try to work on providing water to poor people at an affordable rate, without affecting the viability of the DJB.

The Delhi Government should have restricted its generosity to poor households.

(The author is Head, Department of Economics, Alagappa University, Karaikudi.)

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WOMEN

DECCAN HERALD, JAN 3, 2013

Women safety: Govt approves CCTVs, GPS in public transport

Stepping up measures for women's safety across the nation, the government today approved a Rs 1,405-crore project to track and monitor public transport and provide alarm buttons for alerting authorities.

The project involves setting up of closed circuit television (CCTVs) and using global positioning system (GPS) to ensure safety and security of women and girls in distress.

In the first project to be approved since setting up of the Nirbhaya Fund for women safety, the Union Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh approved the safety measures for 53 cities with more than a million in population.

"The CCEA has approved setting up of a unified system at the national level (National Vehicle Security and Tracking System) and State level (City Command and Control Centre) for GPS tracking of location of emergency buttons in and video recording of incidents in public transport vehicles," Finance Minister P Chidambaram told reporters after the meeting.

The project will be implemented within a period of two years after allocation of funds to set up a National Level Vehicle Security and Tracking System and City Command and Control Centre with installation of GPS / CCTV / Panic buttons in public road transport, he said.

The total estimated cost of the project is Rs 1,405 crore and the scheme will be implemented in 32 cities in the first phase, followed by 21 cities in the second phase.

Chidambaram said the project will help in "providing safety and security to women / girl child in distress in minimum response time" through mapping of routes of public vehicles, their tracking, detecting violations through visual and text signals, panic button alert to transport and police.

The project was formulated in the wake of Nirbhaya case on December 16, 2012. Nirbhaya (fearless in Hindi) was the pseudonym given to the Delhi gang-rape victim to hide her identity. The 23-year old paramedic was gang-raped and brutally assaulted by six persons in a moving bus. She died in a Singapore hospital on December 29.

Chidambaram said the proposal by Road Transport and Highways Ministry was one of the three based on the recommendations of Justice J S Verma Committee and the Justice Usha Mehra, Commission of Enquiry.

HINDU, JAN 1, 2013

Women leave the door open for other women

A woman winning a close election against a man results in an increase in the ratio of female candidates fielded by major parties in the next election, according to a study

For equity: While parties are likely to renominate women after previous electoral success, many feel adequate representation for women in government is still a long way off.—
Photo S. Subramaniam

A body of new data, including original analysis by *The Hindu*, is showing for the first time that women politicians are slowly but surely opening the door for other women politicians.

The Hindu's analysis of data from the 2013 Assembly elections has shown that women are significantly more likely to contest and win from a constituency previously held by women. Women were twice as likely to contest election in a constituency held by a woman than one held by a man in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, *The Hindu's* analysis of 2008 and 2013 election results found. In Delhi, meanwhile, women were three times more likely to contest in a constituency held by a woman than that held by a man. (Mizoram had no women MLAs in its outgoing Assembly and so could not be considered for this analysis.)

Women were over four times more likely to win in 2013 a constituency that was held in 2008 by a woman in Chhattisgarh, while for Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh the probability rose to nearly six and seven times respectively. Only in Delhi did the three women who won in 2013 win from constituencies previously held by men; no woman won a second time in Mizoram.

Undoubtedly, the proportion of both candidates and winners who are women is still very low. Women formed between 4% (Mizoram) and 8% (Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan) of candidates and between 0% (Mizoram) and 14% (Rajasthan) of winners, well below their share in the voter turnout and in the total population.

But the doors might be opening slowly, and in unexpected ways. Economists Sonia Bhalotra of the University of Essex, Irma Clots-Figueras of the Universidad Carlos III de Madrid and Lakshmi Iyer of Harvard Business School analysed Assembly election data for 16 States between 1980 and 2007 for a working paper that they discussed with *The Hindu*. They looked only at candidates fielded by major parties (and not independents as well), and only at close elections won by a woman against a man, so as to make sure that the constituencies they were looking at were not unusual in any particular way (since that constituency could just as easily have voted in a man).

They found that a woman winning a close election against a man resulted in a 9.2% increase in the proportion of female candidates fielded by major parties in that

constituency in the next election. This increase was driven by women re-contesting and not by new women entering the field, they found.

Reduction in bias

Further analysis suggests that what's driving this increase in women candidates is not a reduction in voter bias, but a reduction in party bias. Voters were not necessarily more likely to vote in a woman after a woman has held office, but political parties that had had a successful woman candidate were more likely to nominate women in the future.

However, the impact of women's electoral success was limited in important ways, they found. For one, the effect slowed with time; in the subsequent election, the increase in female candidates fell to 4.2%. The increase in future female candidacy was limited to constituencies in which women won. Additionally, while its effect on women's candidacy was clear, the electoral success of a woman, however, did not have an impact on the chance of a woman winning the next election, they found.

In short, their data indicates that once a party takes a chance on a woman candidate, her performance seems to make them more amenable to nominating more women. "When we look deeper it seems that it works by them being more amenable to nominating the winning women again. We wish we could say it made them more amenable to nominating any woman but we do not find evidence of this," Prof. Bhalotra told *The Hindu*.

This relative relaxation in party bias, if not voter bias, is also the pathway that economist Rikhil Bhavnani, assistant professor at the university of Wisconsin-Madison, identified in his pioneering research on the impact of reservations on women's candidacy and electoral success. Making use of a natural experiment — the reservation for women of one-third of municipal seats in Mumbai in 1997, followed by the rotation of reservations in 2002 throwing some reserved seats open — Professor Bhavnani found that women were five times more likely to win election from an open constituency that had been reserved for women in the previous election than from a constituency that was open both times.

Prof. Bhavnani found that "reservations mainly work through introducing into politics a cohort of women that are able to secure party tickets and win office after reservations lapse" and not evidently through a decrease in voter bias towards women. *The Hindu's* findings from the 2013 and 2008 Assembly results appeared consistent with the demonstration effect that his work had uncovered, he said in an email to newspaper.

All of this taken together, it seems to be the case that once a political party takes a chance on a woman and she wins, she does well enough at the very least for her political party to renominate her, if not for other political parties to also put up female candidates against her and for independent female candidates to be inspired to run. Then why aren't more parties doing it, and more often?

Representatives of the two major national parties admitted to *The Hindu* that they were a long way off from adequate representation for women. “This might be increasing but the numbers are still very, very low and a lot more needs to be done,” Nirmala Sitharaman, BJP spokesperson said. “There are still far too few women getting tickets, and that is why we have been pushing for the Women’s Reservation Bill,” Congress minister and MP Girija Vyas, former chairperson of the National Commission for Women, added.

HINDU, JAN 1, 2013

New mobile application for women’s safety

As a “New Year gift to the female fraternity of the Capital,” the Delhi Multimodal Transport System (DIMTS) has come out with “Telltail”, a security application on android and smartphones. Soon it may be available on other phones. The free application will be launched in the third week of January and can be easily downloaded from Google Play.

Telltail, once downloaded on the phones, will help users reach their friends and family by pressing a button in case of an emergency. It will help the user raise a security alert by contacting the police, friends and family simultaneously. The application will also provide visual tracking information of the user.

The application will have three button options — “Track Me,” “Track By Vehicle” and “Panic Button” — by clicking which the user will reach her primary contacts within seconds.

The “Track Me” button will help the primary contact locate the tracking route of the user through the ‘map location’ icon on the screen. In the “Track By Vehicle” option, the user will just have to enter the vehicle number. This will help DIMTS track the vehicle status, and subsequently link the user with the monitored vehicle.

And on pressing the “Panic Button” for just three seconds, the user can generate an alert to the backend server of DIMTS. It will send detailed information of the location to the primary as well as other registered contacts through an SMS.

DIMTS managing director S.N. Sahai told *The Hindu*: “We are making sure that this application can also be used in GPS/GPRS phones. So, if GPS/GPRS is available, the application will send exact location details to the DIMTS server to the registered contacts along with the primary contacts but if GPS/GPRS is not available; the application will use SMS to send location information to the DIMTS server and registered contacts.”

Asked how the application differed from other available applications, Mr. Sahai said, “The Track by Vehicle’ option is not available in any other application. DIMTS is already tracking autos and buses in Delhi, it has a credible data on the same which will help us track a vehicle faster.”

“Also, since the GPS system drains off the battery very fast, and while using it, a mobile can go off and the user may not get required help in time. Therefore, we have made sure that in the ‘Track By Vehicle’ option, the user will not have to switch on his/her GPS. He/she just needs to enter the vehicle number so that the DIMTS can immediately notify the user about the details of the vehicle. At present, the application supports tracking of the new autos that are fitted with the GPS devices,” he added.

On a personal note, Mr. Sahai said: “My wife was once teased when she was travelling with me. I gift this application to the woman of Delhi as a tribute.”

Mr. Sahai’s wife died of cancer last month.

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- The application will provide visual tracking information of the user on the map to primary contacts
 - DIMTS has a credible data on tracking autos and buses in Delhi which will help us track a vehicle faster: Sahai