

The IAS and Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation

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Governance depends crucially on the IAS. This point has been dramatically illustrated by the division of the Andhra Pradesh IAS cadre consequent to the creation of Telangana State. The public has little or no information of the events concerned but the following seems to have happened.

Of the 284 IAS AP cadre officers, Telangana state needed 163 IAS officers for administering its 10 districts (out of 23 districts of AP). The allocation by Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) was submitted to the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh much before the existing state was to be divided on June 2, 2014. The PM was then persuaded by senior AP officers posted in Delhi to allow IAS officers who were 5 years near retirement to choose their state and thus a second scheme was submitted accordingly. Faced with a General Election, Singh decided to leave the decision to the incoming government. Meanwhile, on June 2, only 44 officers were allocated to serve the new State. As a result, Telangana IAS officers are handling three or more portfolios each till now and normal work suffered.

But by the time the second scheme went for approval by the new PM Narendra Modi, a major controversy had erupted since this scheme would alter seniority in the two new cadres for a considerable time. The PM then decided against granting any option. But officers were by now emboldened to start lobbying with DoPT seeking correction of place of birth, changes in insider-outsider status, consideration for spouse factor, property in Hyderabad, health reasons, etc .

The third list was released in August 2014 for reactions and some officers approached the Administrative Tribunal for relief. The Tribunal then asked DoPT to give personal hearings to them. Finally, the fourth version was made at the end of September 2014 and another in late October 2014. This fifth scheme was finalised on 4 November 2014 and is now awaiting clearance by the PM.

In this difficult transition, most of the IAS officers were confused, fearful and unwilling to take critical actions. It was obvious that based on their places of birth, about 100 officers would go to AP and 12 to Telangana. The rest of 172 'outsider' officers would be distributed between the two States. Again 'outsider' IAS officers lobbied hard to get their preferred State and CM (each writing to DoPT recommending their favorites).

Worse still, nearly 83 IAS officers posted in AP were provisionally allocated to Telangana and similarly about 35 IAS officers serving Telangana were allocated to AP. These 88 officers were naturally paralysed as they feared that they would not get the support for their actions from the government after their allocation to the other state. Further, their paralysis affected functioning of both their senior and junior colleagues. The entire cadre thus was forced into stasis. Fears of getting "bad" posts or hopes for getting "good" posts elsewhere after allocation were foremost.

Relocation would affect not only their careers and property but also the lives of their wives and children. Thus the effect of the cadre paralysis meant that the transition and governance of the two successor States was left to the political system to work out. Both the governments were formed by political parties without recent experience the TDP in Andhra Pradesh had been out of power for a decade, the TRS in Telangana was transiting from a mass movement to governance for the first time. Both had just come to power after a hotly disputed State division and subsequent tumultuous election. Disputes about allocation of funds, staff, power and water are occupying all the attention. The normal working of government has not received attention it deserves.

Correct advice from the cadre was in short supply. As a result, the whole burden had to be carried on by politicians. Each successor government was aided by only a dozen IAS officers who committed themselves to the tasks set for them and bore the main burden. Some of them seemed to take hasty and illconsidered decisions at the behest of their political masters. Many stood firm and maintained their status as proper civil servants upholding the Constitution and the letter and spirit of the Reorganisation Act.

All this goes to show the importance of a cohesive and confident IAS cadre in order to run effective and responsible governance. Hopefully the nightmare will be over once the Centre, which must bear the entire blame, finally decides their fate. After that there is much work to be done and the IAS will have to show the true spirit and dedication to the successor States that is required of it. It cannot afford to fail.

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