

## Civil Service Reforms

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Bhilwara in Rajasthan became an example of how the efforts of the local bureaucracy can effectively tackle the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic.

This event showed the importance of the role played by the civil services, containing the spread of the pandemic at the community level.

What it showed as well was that the civil services in India also needed to be reformed along the lines of an ever-increasing competent, globalised world. Globalisation in itself has enabled certain negative outcomes to affect the functioning of bureaucracy in India.

Thus, civil services reforms in India are needed to address several challenges like structural issues, political interference etc.

This article will give details about Civil Services Reforms in India within the context of the IAS Exam.

### Importance of Civil Services Reforms in India

Civil Services in India need to keep pace with the march of technology in today's globalised world. Hence, the reforms of Civil Services is to reorient it into a dynamic, efficient and fluid apparatus of public service. The reforms will also raise the qualitative standards of the public service delivered to the general citizens.

India's massive bureaucracy is maintained at huge cost by the country's taxpayers, whose average income is among the lowest in the world.

But the public perception about the members of the civil services, who function at cutting edge and higher coordinating and policymaking levels, is that they are burdensome low-performers' heading a highly bloated bureaucracy, which is, often, perceived to be corrupt and inefficient in governing the country.

Hence, it is important that reforms on civil services take place at the earliest.

### Challenges in the Indian Civil Services

The current setup of the Indian Civil Services brings is fraught with challenges, some of them are as follows:

**1. Alleged Status Quo-ist Mentality of Indian Bureaucracy:** As executors of public services, civil servants have to be receptive towards change, but that does not seem to be the case when they feel these changes will end their privileges and perks.

For example, the 73rd and 74th Amendments of the Indian Constitution enabled rural and urban local governments to become more self-governing, however the reluctance of the civil servants on the ground have meant that the vision of these amendments are yet to be realised as the amendments promised more accountability and altered their roles.

**2. Rule-Book Bureaucracy:** Rule book bureaucracy means following rules and laws of the book to the letter that it times it does not fulfil the actual needs of the people.

This attitude has led to issues such as red-tapism, complicated procedures and the apathetic response of the bureaucracy to the will and needs of the people.

**3. Political interference:** In order to fulfil certain populist demands, whether they are right or wrong is another debate, politicians influence how administrative officials carry out their work. This leads to corruption, arbitrary transfers, ultimately giving rise to inefficiency in the bureaucracy as a whole.

**4. Decaying structure of the Civil Services:** Civil Services are conceived primarily to deliver the core functions of the state, such as maintenance of law and order and implement government orders.

- However, with the advent of globalisation, and economic reforms, the role of the state has changed.
- Therefore, there are new challenges due to technological evolution (for example cyber security). Thus, there is a higher demand (**of specialist officers**) for domain knowledge at policy level.

## Reforms on Civil Services

Reforms on Civil Services will be focused on the following areas:

1. Recruitment
2. Training
3. Evaluation
4. Governance

**1. Recruitment:** The existing 60 plus separate civil services at the central and state level needs to be reduced through rationalization and harmonization of services. Recruits should be placed in a central talent pool, which would then allocate candidates by matching their competencies and the job description of the post.

Bringing in specialised recruits at the higher level of government will improve overall efficiency

**2. Training:** There is a need to develop ongoing training and immersion modules on a district-by-district basis. By implementing a Code of Ethics, civil servants will be inculcated with morals that can put the needs of the people above all.

**3. Evaluation:** There is an inherent need to set key responsibility/focus areas and progressively reduce discretionary aspects to evaluate civil servants.

- Develop benchmarks to assess the performance of officers and compulsorily retire those deemed unable to meet the benchmarks.
- Review existing schemes and introduce new schemes of incentives for extraordinary performance.

**4. Governance:** The concept of e-governance is bound to play a major role in the reform process of civil services. With the increase in literacy rates and accessibility to technology, the civil servants will be more accountable and transparent in the conduct of their duties.

Any present day civil service reform is incomplete if it neglects the role of information and communication technology.

There has been a need to reform keeping in view of the changing circumstances, there is a need to reform civil services and make civil servants pro-active in the developmental process.