

The answer to question why the functions enlisted for proposed civic centres throughout the country can not be assigned to present civic bodies , you may find here.

OUTPUT OF PRESENT CIVIC SERVICES SYSTEM

The system of governance through six layers (for metros & towns) and three layers at district level (for villages) and now some tightening through RTI Act and proposed LOKPAL, Citizen's Charter Act or like , has no doubt yielded or may yield good results in the form of putting the Indian economy on growth track , making villages accessible and livable and developing towns and metro cities. The competitive airlines, fast trains, ever evolving transport & logistic services and highly advanced communication and computing gadgets are commendable. The computerization of various processes of Govt. departments are really laudable.

But whereas the whole development has taken a very long time (sixty three years) on one hand, it has not been able to address the following basic issues on the other:-

- The roads in various states and small towns are in bad shape and travelling or transporting through them is a horrible task.
- The cities and even metros remain unclean – garbage dumps, poor drainage & sewerage, dust pileups and scattered sachets plastic bags/cigarette –bidi butts and Pan peaks , parking problems are a common site.
- Electricity supply is not regular and even nominal at many places of the country due to lack of power plants and poor maintenance of existing plants. The ever essential dams or the like

are unwarrantedly resisted, perhaps due to the wish of some to keep poor undeveloped.

- The increasing poverty and hunger level and rich-poor gap clearly shows that Govt. departments are not able to take care of around 70% population of the country which is poor and around 30% are bearing the burden of those 70% or ironically the 30% are enjoying the slavery of 70%.
- In cities and metros all the newspapers are full of reports on inaction and inefficiency of govt. deptts. and increasing crime graph . People complain that they draw attention of the concerned officers/MLAs/CM but nothing is happening for the last three to five years. In short some areas develop but many remain undeveloped for a very long time.
- It has become very difficult to think of getting the things move in the Govt. departments/ work done without the help of agent/link and/or bribe. Therefore even mass level efforts of Government to reduce public interaction in tax departments like VAT, income tax, Excise, Custom & service tax through computerisation are proving a failure due to huge number of returns, mass level errors and erroneous working of Govt. officials.
- The encroachments of public space by poor and lower middle class and illegal constructions by educated ones and rich are rampant .
- The education standards at many Govt. schools are not up to mark. In villages and small towns, though schools may be there

but teaching is almost inexistent. Due to lack of education the awareness level of public is very low in general.

The happenings at CWG games, the politics in sports federations , the scams in various govt. projects/approvals & sanctions , the death of poor on falling down of illegally constructed building at Lalita Park are recent examples of inefficiency of our country's system of governance.

The poor image of our country in the eyes of all developed countries is a clear evidence of failure of our system in addressing the issues relating to quality of work and money spent on them.

The slum behind WHO office in Delhi , people say, is a deliberate attempt at keeping the status of the country as developing for snatching the aid from world level funds. What a pity?

In view of the above said negative outputs of our system, the common man has developed a question mark : does this system really have a right to ask for taxes?(In developed colonies people also have to maintain and carry out many Govt. duties on their own – also many activities can be carried out without paying taxes). And **thus a vicious cycle follows leading to poor services from Govt. Departments and neglect of all villages and small towns:**

THE VICIOUS CIRCLE

Lower tax collections – higher need of funds – increasing the taxes – higher burden on public – resorting to all tax evasion devices – lower tax collections.

REASONS FOR NEGATIVE OUTPUTS OF THE SYSTEM OR SHABBY GOVT. FUNCTIONING

These again can be many for various fields. They may differ in nature from field to field, but following reasons can be broadly underlined :

I. Centralised Govt. Functioning & lack of close supervision

The six layer/three layer system of administration in various Govt. services makes it undesirably centralized in the sense that for each remedial or corrective measure/welfare policies, the action needs approvals from bottom to top on the one hand and offices providing civic services (enlisted at the start) are located at far off places in cities & towns and at districts in the villages on the other. As a result the Govt. departments become out of reach for the poor and difficult to access for the middle class(i.e. for 85% of the population) .

Most of the people remain unaware of procedures and intricacies of a Govt. department and thus are befooled by many viz. a simple objection by a clerk results into wastage of precious time and energy of many. This leads to creation of middlemen between Govt. and public which brings all sorts of evils attached to such middlemanship.

This centralization of public service agencies is also responsible for lack of close supervision of work being carried out by a contractor or of the duties assigned to various Govt. employees.

II. Centralised pooling of taxes/funds

The taxes are collected at various Govt. offices and go to a central pool via treasury receipts/challans – state taxes to state treasury & central taxes to central treasury. A large sum is spent by the Govt. for evolving, managing and regulating such a tax recovery system.

The funds collected are allocated to different expenditure heads according to the budget. The budget is prepared after assessing demands of various sectors represented by various agencies / departments/ committees of the Govt. . The demands are based on salaries & overhead expenses of employees in a sector like CAG office or requirements of an area assessed by the MLA etc..

The funds actually collected are then disbursed as per the budget and any escalation in expenditure Or shortfall in collections is recouped from central funds or higher state taxes in case of a state or by imposing higher central taxes or by reducing subsidies etc. or from accumulated or parked funds in case of the Centre.

Due to above system the following pitfalls emerge :-

- **The payer does not know** where the taxes deposited/ paid go and who is answerable for expenditure out of that and thus the public generally feel that their taxes are not being spent on them when they find poor services from Govt. departments;
- All the taxes are first collected in treasury and then disbursed to various sections leading to **the problem of erroneous availability of funds** with a section at a particular point of time.
- The system also **generates the legacy of approval of files** at various stages which contributes to delay in action and corruption and at many times essential works remain unattended for a long period;
- There is no particular check on whether all sections of the public liable to pay taxes are paying their dues. Many people who start work (salaried or business) do not think of paying income Tax, excise etc. up to a very long time even if their income crossed many boundaries. Similarly established people evade direct taxes by all sorts of means . As a result, **the indirect taxes remain high and the whole burden is borne by the middle and poor classes** leading to the widening of the rich- poor divide.
- Tax recovery control being centralized ,i.e., not very near to the assesseees, leads to the system of voluntary filing of tax returns under

self assessment scheme. The scheme is being misused by both sides to the maximum leading to **the creation of a strong parallel economy** , a black curse hindering our country's path of development.

- The shortage of funds in the hands of the Govt., **in turn, handicaps it in providing social security services to the public** at large. It is a pity that general public has to arrange for it by themselves. Those who can not make both ends meet are normally responsible for crimes and poor road habits like spitting , chewing tobacco, throwing litter anywhere , hawking on pavements etc. The literate people finding no check on these menaces also have adopted these bad habits .

Also the tax collections which are already short due to evasions and avoidance are further squeezed by **scams** and the govt. always runs short of funds for various maintenance services.

III. Leniency and absence of deterrent punishment to the real culprits.

The reason of this type can be summarized in two words for our country i.e Loose Democracy. Democracy in itself is the essence of country's governance system these days but when it is applied with partiality and acceptance of immoral and/or indisciplined behaviour of people , it plays havoc as is happening in the country today.

The people obeying rules laid down by the Chinese Government and the resultant progress of their country is the example in this direction. The freedom with appropriate and prompt punishments for violations of rules is the only way of making public progressive and obedient.

Why is our rules enforcement machinery lenient ? The only reason that Govt. officers and politicians would like to extend for this malady is that most of the country people are poor and live under pressures then how police , judiciary or other officers can be harsh on them ? But the hidden reason which politicians know but do not extend and which Govt. officers refrain from providing is that frequent and all pervasive punishments will erode their vote bank and thus it will be difficult for them to form a govt. And this vote Bank protection policy

compels leaders not to take harsh steps against non implementation of or non-compliance of good policy measures or against various indisciplines on roads. Our age-old constitution also needs a change in this respect.

The pity is that the vote bank of our country mostly comprises of the people from BPL and lower middle class sections of public and these people generally are not aware of their rights. They just cast vote without knowing what they should get in return. Those who are aware of their rights or rich ones get their work done by one means or the other and thereby are not interested in casting vote or in giving due care to govt. rules and regulations. They take full advantage of the leniency on the part of the Govt. rules enforcement machinery and do not care for what is good for poor.

Another pitiable condition is that when a poor literate or aware person raises voice against the system or a real culprit, the whole law enforcement machinery becomes very harsh to him or her. This develops fear among illiterates on one hand and leads to the absence of punishment of the real culprit on the other. The helplessness of the poor drives them towards crime so as to fulfill their hidden desire of becoming rich at the earliest.

This very reason also works as a supplement to lack of supervision on the part of the Govt. officers and thus the contractors feel free to do any type of bungling to amass wealth.

IV. Posting of officers at far off places/states and no policy of giving preference to local contractors, auditors, doctors, lawyers, architects, valuers and other such service providers

In the name of democracy and due to centralized functioning of Government the Govt. posts are made transferable and this practice which is often misused, has given rise to many ills, as we all are aware.

An officer posted at a far-off destination or transferred from his home town state/district, accepts such a situation with a heavy mind on the one hand and

feels alienated on the other. He/ she generally prays or waits eagerly for return to the home town or state or district.

This alienation hampers the process of developing love to locals and their locality and thus undermines the interest required for the development of the area and its people where they are posted. The same happens with the public as they are not able to establish a fruitful link with him or her. This alienation also is a root cause of corruption/scams by officers/leaders or for their luring away by unscrupulous contractors.

The same dilemma and distrustful situation arises before a contractor, auditor, doctor etc. when they get assignments away from their state. They just do their duty or carry out the work without thinking an ounce about locals and their locality. The locals also do not generally extend cooperation to them in welfare measures, if any, taken up by them as just another assignment and not as their duty. It is mainly because of their half hearted approach without any time frame. Various genuine NGOs are also successful only in a limited area due to this reason only.

This reason again leads and contributes to lenient supervision by Govt. officers or indulging in corruption.

THE CONCLUSION

THUS the ills of present system and its inability to tackle the basic problems of our country show that it can not be made accountable to general public as it is. The civic centres near to public and collecting taxes according to capacity remains the only way to make the Govt. machinery accountable.

But again question arises why are reforms necessary? Can the reasons for poor working of Govt. Departments be removed to make them efficient? Will the initiatives being taken by various Chief Ministers like Public Service Guarantee Act, 2010 in Madhya Pradesh Or Nitish Kumar's Right to service Bill, 2010 or all round development of Delhi or Narendra Modi's strict administration & vigilant drive or centre's citizens charter Bill be sufficient to help the

illiterates and to make Govt. babus accountable and answerable? The answer to these questions you will find a poor 'No' in the next chapter.