



FACULTY OF JURIDICAL SCIENCES

COURSE:BALLB

Semester –IV

SUBJECT: SOCIOLOGY-III

SUBJECT CODE: BAL-401

NAME OF FACULTY: DR.SHIV

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Lecture-39



Indian Administrative Service

The *Indian Administrative Service (IAS)* is the administrative arm of the All India Services.^[3] Considered the premier civil service of India,^{[3][4]} the IAS is one of the three arms of the All India Services along with the Indian Police Service (IPS) and the Indian Forest Service^[citation needed] (IFS). Members of these three services serve the Government of India as well as the individual states. IAS officers may also be deployed to various public sector undertakings.

As with other countries following the Westminster parliamentary system of government, the IAS is a part of the permanent bureaucracy of the nation,^[5] and is an inseparable part of the executive of the Government of India. As such, the bureaucracy remains politically neutral and guarantees administrative continuity to the ruling party or coalition.^[5]

Upon confirmation of service, an IAS officer serves a probationary period as a sub-divisional magistrate. Completion of this probation is followed by an executive administrative role in a district as a district magistrate and collector which lasts several years, as long as sixteen years in some states. After this tenure, an officer may be promoted to head a whole state division, as a divisional commissioner.

On attaining the higher scales of the pay matrix, IAS officers may lead government departments or ministries. In these roles, IAS officers represent the country at the international level in bilateral and multilateral negotiations. If serving on a deputation, they may be employed in intergovernmental organisations such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Asian Development Bank, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, or the United Nations, or its agencies. IAS officers are also involved in the conduct of elections in India as mandated by the Election Commission of India.

History

During the occupation of India by the East India Company, the civil services were classified into three – covenanted, uncovenanted and special civil services. The covenanted civil service, or the East India Company's Civil Service (HEICCS), as it was called, largely comprised British civil servants occupying the senior posts in the government.^{[4][6][7]} The uncovenanted civil service was introduced solely to facilitate the entry of Indians onto the lower rung of the administration.^{[6][7][8]} The special service comprised specialised departments, such as the Indian Forest Service, the Imperial Police and the Indian Political Service, whose ranks were drawn from either the covenanted civil service or the British Indian Army. The Imperial Police included many British Indian Army officers among its members, although after 1893 an annual exam was used to select its officers.^{[8][7]} In 1858 the HEICCS was replaced by the Indian Civil Service (ICS),^{[6][7]} which became the highest civil service in the British Raj between 1858 and 1947. The last British appointments to the ICS were made in 1942.^{[7][8]}

With the passing of the Government of India Act 1919 by the Parliament of the United Kingdom, the Indian civil services—under the general oversight of the Secretary of State for India—were split into two arms, the All India Services and the Central Services.^[9] The Indian Civil Service was one of the ten All India Services.

In 1946 at the Premier's Conference, the Central Cabinet decided to form the Indian Administrative Service, based on the Indian Civil Service;^{[10][11]} and the Indian Police Service, based on the Imperial Police.^[10]

There is no alternative to this administrative system... The Union will go, you will not have a united India if you do not have good All-India Service which has the independence to speak

out its mind, which has [the] sense of security that you will standby [*sic*] your work... If you do not adopt this course, then do not follow the present Constitution. Substitute something else... these people are the instrument. Remove them and I see nothing but a picture of chaos all over the country.

When India was partitioned following the departure of the British in 1947, the Indian Civil Service was divided between the new dominions of India and Pakistan. The Indian remnant of the ICS was named the Indian Administrative Service,^[17] while the Pakistani remnant was named the Pakistan Administrative Service. The modern Indian Administrative Service was created under Article 312(2) in part XIV of the Constitution of India,^{[18][19]} and the All India Services Act, 1951.^[20]

Recruitment

Prime Minister of India, Narendra Modi, interacting with IAS officers of 2015 batch (on probation)

There are three modes of recruitment into the Indian Administrative Service. IAS officers may enter the IAS by passing the Civil Services Examination, which is conducted by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC).^[3] Officers recruited this way are called direct recruits. Some IAS officers are also recruited from the state civil services,^[3] and, in rare cases, selected from non-state civil service.^[3] The ratio between direct recruits and promotees is fixed at 2:1. All IAS officers, regardless of the mode of entry, are appointed by the President of India.^[18]

Only about 180 candidates out of over 1 million applicants, who apply through the Civil Services Examination (CSE), are successful, a success rate of less than 0.01 per cent.^{[10][21]} As a result, the members of the service are often referred as "heaven-born".^{[22][23]}

Unlike candidates appointed to other civil services, a successful IAS candidate is rendered ineligible to re-enter the Civil Services Examination.^[24] From 1951 to 1979, an IAS candidate was required to submit two additional papers, as well as three optional papers (instead of two as with other civil services) to be eligible for the Indian Administrative Service or the Indian Forest Service. The two additional papers were postgraduate level submissions, compared to the graduate level of the optional papers, and it was this distinction that resulted in a higher status for the IAS and IFS. The two postgraduate level submissions were later removed, but this has not changed the perceived higher status of the IAS and IFS.^{[25][26]} After the selection process, the successful candidates undergo training at the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration in Mussoorie, Uttarakhand.^[11]

State cadres

Cadre allocation police

The central government announced a new cadre allocation policy for the All India Services in August 2017, touting it as a policy to ensure national integration of the bureaucracy and to ensure an All India character of the services.^{[27][28][29]} The existing twenty-six cadres were to be divided into five zones by the Department of Personnel and Training.^{[30][31][32][33]} Under the new policy, a candidate first selects their zones of preference, in descending order, then indicates a cadre preference from each preferred zone. The candidate indicates his second cadre preference for every preferred zone subsequently. The preference for the zones and cadres remains in the same order and no change is permitted.^{[27][28][29]}

Previous cadre allocation policies

Until 2008, there was no formal system that permitted the selection of a state cadre preferred by the candidate. If the candidate was not placed in a vacancy in their home state, they would be allocated to other states, which were selected r. For example, if in a particular year the roster begins from 'a', then the first candidate on from a roster in alphabetic order, starting from 'a', 'h', 'm' or 't', depending on the yea the roster will go to the Andhra Pradesh state cadre, the next one to Bihar, and then to Chhattisgarh, Gujarat and so on in alphabetical order.^[35] The next year the roster starts from 'h', for either Haryana or Himachal Pradesh (the two states alternate roster years). This system, practised since the mid-1980s, ensured that officers from different states were placed all over India.

The system of permanent state cadres resulted in wide disparities of professional exposure for officers when comparing those from developed versus less developed states.^{[35][36]} Changes in state cadres were only permitted on grounds of marriage to an All India Services officer of another state cadre or under other exceptional circumstances. The officers were allowed to go to their home state cadre on deputation for a limited period after which they would be required to return to their allocated cadre.^{[35][36]}

From 2008, IAS officers were assigned to state cadres at the beginning of their service. There was one cadre for each Indian state, except for two joint cadres: Assam–Meghalaya and Arunachal Pradesh–Goa–Mizoram–Union Territories (AGMUT).^[36] The "insider-outsider ratio" (ratio of officers who were posted to their home states to those from other states) was maintained at 1:2, with one-third of the direct recruits being 'insiders' from the same state.^[37] The rest were posted as outsiders according to the state allocation roster in states other than their home states,^[37] as indicated by their preference.

Responsibilities of an IAS officer

The typical functions performed by an IAS officer are:

- To collect revenue and function as court officials in matters of revenue and crime (for the revenue courts and criminal courts of executive magistrates), to maintain law and order, to implement union and state government policies at the grass-roots level when posted to field positions i.e. as sub-divisional magistrates, additional district magistrates, district magistrates and divisional commissioners, and to act as an agent of the government in the field, i.e. to act as an intermediary between the public and the government.^{[4][38][39][40]}
- To handle the administration and daily proceedings of the government, including the formulation and implementation of policy in consultation with the minister-in-charge of a specific ministry or department.^{[4][38][39][40]}
- To contribute to policy formulation, and to make a final decision in certain matters, with the agreement of the minister concerned or the council of ministers (depending upon the weight of the matter), when posted at the higher level in the Government of India as a joint secretary, additional secretary, special secretary or secretary equivalent, secretary and Cabinet Secretary, and in state governments as secretary, principal secretary, additional chief secretary or special chief secretary and chief secretary.^{[4][38][39][40]}

Career progression

At the beginning of their career, IAS officers receive district training with their home cadres followed by their first posting. Their initial role is as a sub-divisional magistrate (SDM) and they are placed in charge of a district sub-division. As SDMs, they are entrusted with maintaining law and order, as well as general administration and development work, of the sub-division.^[40] With the completion of their training, IAS officers are assigned to various posts in the state and union governments, and in local-self governments, (municipal corporations, zilla parishads), and public sector undertakings.^[41]

In 2015 it was announced that a new designation of Assistant Secretary at the Central Secretariat had been created to enable new IAS officers to be posted to Delhi for a three-month assignment as part of their training regime. IAS officers were previously only permitted to go on a deputation once assigned to the Central Secretariat after nine years of service in their home cadre. It was observed that the experience of central functions was severely lacking among these deputations, resulting in this change in their training.^{[42][43][44]}

Completion of this probation is followed by an executive role in a district as a district magistrate and collector, which lasts several years, as long as sixteen years in some states. After this tenure as a district magistrate, the officer may be promoted to head a whole state division, as a divisional commissioner.

On attaining the apex scale, IAS officers may lead government departments or ministries. In these roles, IAS officers represent the country at the international level in bilateral and multilateral negotiations. If serving on a deputation,^[34] they may be employed in intergovernmental organisations such as the World Bank,^{[34][45][46]} the International Monetary Fund,^{[34][47][48]} the Asian Development Bank,^{[34][49][50]} the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank,^{[51][52][53]} and the United Nations or its agencies.^{[34][54][55]} IAS officers are also involved in the conduct of elections in India as mandated by the Election Commission of India.^[56]

Upon retirement, high ranking IAS officers have occupied constitutional posts such as the Chief Election Commissioner of India,^[66] the Comptroller and Auditor General of India,^[67] and the chairperson of the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC).^[68] They have also become members of administrative tribunals, such as the National Green Tribunal and the Central Administrative Tribunal, as well as chiefs of regulators including the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India,^[69] the Securities and Exchange Board of India,^{[70][71]} and the Reserve Bank of India.^[72] If a serving IAS officer is appointed to a constitutional post such as Comptroller and Auditor General of India, Chief Election Commissioner of India or chairperson of UPSC or as head of a statutory authority, such as the National Human Rights Commission, the National Commission for Women or the Central Information Commission, he or she is deemed to have retired from service.^{[73][74][75]}

IAS officers can also be deputed to private organisations for a fixed tenure under Rule 6(2)(ii) of the Indian Administrative Service (Cadre) Rules, 1954.^{[76][77]}

Assessment of suitability for promotion and posting

The performance of IAS officers is assessed through a performance appraisal report. The reports are reviewed to judge the suitability of an officer before a promotion or a posting in the union or state governments. The report is compiled annually and is initiated by the officers themselves, designated as the reporting officer, who list their achievements, completion of assigned activities and targets for the year. The report is then modified and commented on by the reviewing officer, usually the superior of the reporting officer. Reports are forwarded by the reviewing officer to the accepting authority, who conducts a final review of the report.^[3]

Major concerns and reforms

Shortage of officers

It was reported in 2017 that there is a shortage of about 1,700 IAS officers in the country.^{[78][79][80]} Despite this, the government has stated that annual recruitment of IAS officers will not increase, to avoid impacting the career progression of existing officers and the overall structure of the service.

Lateral entry

Media personalities, some retired IAS officers and a few academics have argued in favour of lateral entry into the IAS to inject fresh blood into the service. They argue that it would help refresh the bureaucracy, offer competitiveness and bring in alternate perspectives. A counter-argument has been put forward that a lateral entry process could be manipulated due to corruption and cronyism.^[88] It is further argued that lateral entry would not lead to improvements in managerial performance or accountability,^[89] and while it may create synergy between the government and big businesses, it could also compromise the integrity of government.^[90] It has also been argued that it could weaken the bureaucracy instead