

Mian Waheed-ud-Din Joint Secretary (Public Affairs) at Prime Minister's Secretariat. PAS, 18th Common

International Women's Day Special

Friday, March 01, 2013



Q): Did you join Civil Service by choice, or was that your destiny which pushed you into this profession?

Mian Waheed-ud-Din: I joined Civil Service by choice. Previously, I worked as a fighter pilot in Pakistan Air Force (PAF), but then I decided to join Civil Service. I was interested in Pakistan Administrative Service (PAS), formerly the DMG Group. In fact, the only reason for my joining the Civil Service was my father. He was also a Civil Servant of the 1948 Batch and I had always seen him working for people, for people's good and their collective benefit. It was my desire to work like him and to help people. This is why I joined Civil Service of Pakistan.

Q: So, have you been successful in your aim?

MWD: Very partly. I must tell you that civil bureaucracy is a very big machine which tries to maintain status quo. While working in the civil bureaucracy one can make some evolutionary changes but can't do something revolutionary. So, I have been partially successful in my aim. One cannot go too much out of the way in this regard.

Q: In the 65 years' history of Pakistan, civil bureaucracy is a pressure group or agent of status quo, what is your opinion?

MWD: Well, as I told you earlier, bureaucracy is a machine which is designed to maintain the status quo, and it's not only true in the Pakistan case only but that's true for all bureaucracies in the world including international agencies like the United Nations (UN). Because they have to follow rules and regulations they have to put forward the piece of advice for their political bosses according to law, big

changes can only be made if there are some radical and revolutionary ideas and ideals. But it is not in the ambit of civil bureaucracy to work as an agent of change. Thus I can say in Pakistan, civil bureaucracy played its role very well in the initial years till about 1958-60. But later bureaucracy became politicised to an extent that bureaucrats, in order to secure good positions, had done things which were liked by their political bosses. Even then, many bureaucrats performed their duties very well. But some of them succumbed to the pressure by politicians.

I would say that if we cut down the size of our bureaucracy, it will not only reduce the non-development expenditures but also help in resolving people's problems speedily.

Q: How far do you think a bureaucrat is important in giving new and innovative ideas to politicians?

MWD: Sometimes it is very important but most of the time politicians have their own ideas, manifestos and agendas so they follow them. Thus bureaucrats can suggest innovative ideas but they cannot impose them. Some of them did make suggestions to their political bosses and those were also taken up.

Q: Are bureaucrats or politicians responsible for the present sorry state of affairs of the public sector enterprises in Pakistan?

MWD: I think definitely they both are responsible. The attitude of both, bureaucracy as well as politicians, matters a lot for this present sorry state of affairs of our public sector enterprises.

Q: What measures can be taken to minimise political interference in the civil bureaucracy?

MWD: Actually, if you see the policies, rules and regulations it prohibits any such interferences but in papers only. The real fact is that these rules are not followed and the only panacea to de-politicisation of civil bureaucracy is 'merit' it must be followed. A few years ago, there was a regular pattern of the posting and transfers of bureaucrats according to their career pattern, grades, seniority etc. But what happens now for each and every posting? A bureaucrat has to get himself requisitioned from various departments and then to further look up towards his political bosses for a suitable posting. Therefore, this is the primary reason for the interference. Moreover, there is no safety of tenure. For instance, if a bureaucrat is posted at a higher level like secretary or commissioner he can be removed any time. If you get up and refused to abide by certain demands he/she will be transferred immediately.



Q: Civil bureaucracy in Pakistan is infamous for red-tapeism. Why do bureaucrats engage in delaying tactics?

MWD: Well, there are two reasons. First, the system in which any case or issue has to be dealt at certain levels. Supposing, a Section Officer makes the file of a case with all relevant record and rules and regulations related to the case and puts up the file to the Deputy Secretary. He gives his comments and sends it to the Joint Secretary. Then he gives his comments and sends the file to Additional Secretary who gives his comments and, finally, the file lands in the office of the Secretary. Usually, this process is taken as something like a deliberate delay. While another reason of the delay is the attitude, because some officers think that a work cannot be done easily so they apply too much rules and regulations. So, the result is delay which is commonly known as red-tapeism.

Q: What reforms are needed to stop such delays?

MWD: The first requirement is the overall change in the attitude of bureaucracy. Then a thorough training is needed which should be fed to the minds of bureaucrats so they can understand that things should not be delayed. Instead they should extend a helping hand to people. Moreover, procedures have to be simplified because there are so many tiers involved. I don't think that so many tiers are required so if we remove these tiers, hopefully, things will improve for the better. In fact, we have a very large bureaucracy. But we need a smart bureaucracy which is efficient and does not delay things. In addition, I would say that if we cut down the size of our bureaucracy, it will not only reduce the non-development expenditures but also help in resolving people's problems speedily.

Q: How do you see the renaming of DMG as PAS?

MWD: Well, DMG - a misnomer – stands for District Management Group. Officers who work at the district level are of 17, 18, 19 or at the most 20-Grade. Because at the district level, there are assistant commissioners and deputy commissioners, while at the divisional level there is a commissioner. So, it was done rightly and it did happen because of the efforts of the DMG Association. In fact, this decision was approved by the prime minister last year at the Annual Dinner of the DMG

Association of which I am also a (Central Executive Committee) member. And now it is wrong to call them as DMGs, who rise to 22 Grade.

Q: Where was your first posting, and any good memory that you would like to share with us?

MWD: My first posting was in Balochistan. I was an Assistant Commissioner in Khuzdar. I spent five years in Balochistan and I have very good memories. The people were very friendly and caring, and I still have very close contacts with them. Then, I was posted in Gilgit as Deputy Commissioner. I also have very good memories of Gilgit. Those were really very good days of my life.

Q: Any message?

MWD: Those who aspire to join the Civil Service should come with a mind to serve people, and not themselves.