

The IAS today

The factors afflicting the Indian Administrative Service are many, but little is done to correct them.

BY R.K. RADHAKRISHNAN



Civil services candidates at a coaching centre in Jaipur.

ROHIT JAIN PARAS

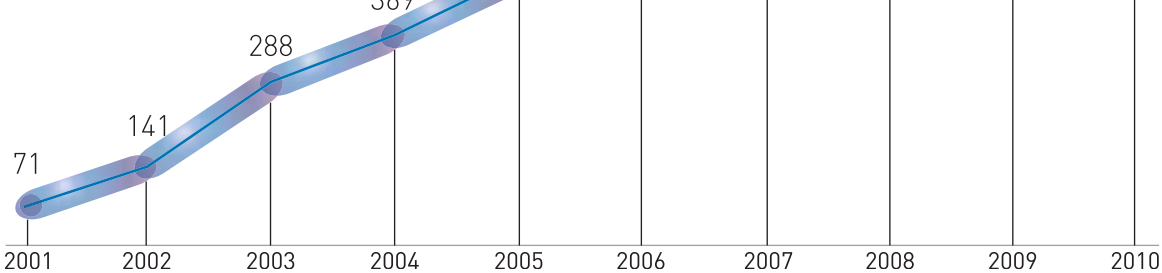
The Indian Administrative Service (IAS), which is the backbone of the administrative machinery in the country and is critical to ensuring the delivery of the services and welfare schemes of the government to end users, is grappling with multiple problems that do not have quick-fix solutions. Growing shortage of officers, serious challenges in cadre management, a virtual absence of cadre audit, and rampant politicisation have combined to make the service ineffective.

Gender inequality is one problem. Women constitute only a fifth of the officers in the IAS (796) compared with men (4,006). While the lucrative, fulfilling and challenging opportunities available in the private sector account for the lack of enthusiasm among youngsters in general to get into the civil service, there is also general disenchantment in the service about how the cadre is managed, especially at the State level. Many States have posts reserved to "punish" officers who are "uncooperative". For instance, in Tamil Nadu, the office of the Commissioner of Disciplinary Proceedings is one such. Dumping officers in this post means that he or she does not even get access to an official vehicle. Every time a government change happens in the State, it is time also for witch-hunt and mindless victimisation.

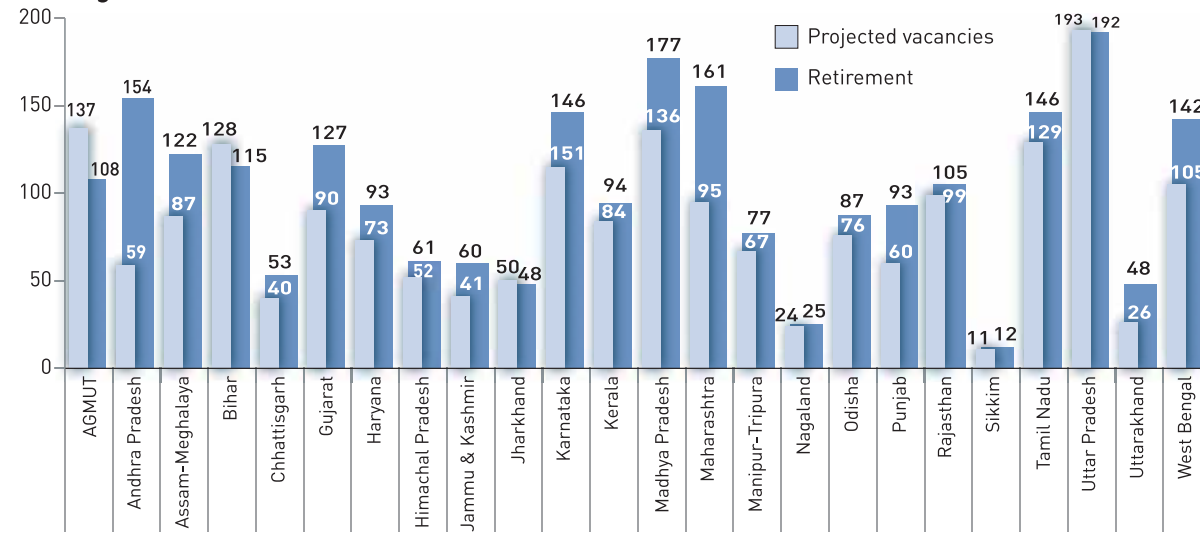
There are a few honourable exceptions to this rule. In Maharashtra, for instance, officers get posted for three years in a post. They can be shifted only after that tenure, barring in special cases. This 'rule' has not been adopted across India: States often come up with their own set of rules, which the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), the nodal Central government agency in charge of IAS officers, barely questions.

Politicisation and increasing corruption are among the other serious issues that affect the service today.

SHORTAGE OF IAS OFFICERS (2001-2010)



Total number of projected vacancies in different cadres until 2020 and total number of IAS officers retiring at cadre level until 2020 from 2010



AGMUT: Arunachal Pradesh-Goa-Mizoram-Union Territories

Fixed terms, better salaries and swift and exemplary punishment for wrongdoing through a Lok Pal/Lok Ayukta mechanism are essential conditions for a better IAS.

Though the vacancies in the coming years are bound to be huge, States do not seem unduly anxious. In the recent past, Gujarat projected the need for one officer in a period of four years. The logic was simple: let us promote State cadre officers to the IAS. They are easier to work with! Strangely again, the DoPT barely does any audit of the projections made by various States or questions the numbers that States demand.

The daily pressure from the politician means that officers are more concerned with being in the right than being serious about the delivery of services. Cases like the death of a young upright officer, the Karnataka cadre officer D.K. Ravi, end up as disincentives to young recruits. The vacancies will remain, and bright youngsters will not look at making a new India as their career choice until the basic issues are addressed.

Cadre strength of Indian Administrative Service (as on 01.01.2015)

Cadre	Total authorised strength	Total
Andhra Pradesh	211	167
Telangana	163	128
AGMUT	337	260
Assam-Meghalaya	263	216
Bihar	342	216
Chhattisgarh	178	138
Gujarat	297	204
Haryana	205	157
Himachal Pradesh	147	107
Jammu & Kashmir*	137	112
Jharkhand	208	149
Karnataka	314	230
Kerala	231	156
Madhya Pradesh	417	325
Maharashtra	350	280
Manipur	110	--
Tripura	96	164
Nagaland	91	61
Odisha	237	190
Punjab	221	176
Rajasthan	296	216
Sikkim	48	37
Tamil Nadu	376	287
Uttarakhand	120	92
Uttar Pradesh	621	484
West Bengal	359	250
TOTAL	6,375	4,802



February 17, 1989: President R. Venkataraman addressing IAS probationers at the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

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