Addressing Conflict of Interest in Bureaucrats

What is the issue?

\n\n

\n
- The mechanism for addressing conflict of interest needs a revamp to bring down corruption and increase governance efficiency.
\n

\n\n

What is the current policy?

\n\n

\n
- India has an official policy regulated by the Ministry of Personnel.
\n

\n\n

\n
- Accordingly senior bureaucrats have to seek permission for commercial employment after their retirement.
\n
- This is to avoid conflict of interest and is naturally inked with the aim of preventing corruption.
\n
- This is being followed from the British era as a measure of ensuring bureaucratic efficiency, especially in the collection of taxes.
\n

\n\n

What are the concerns?

\n\n

\n
- Some bureaucrats mix up the virtues of public service with that of private profit in retirement.
\n
- And naturally end up in exposing themselves to a potential conflict of

interest.
\n
- Grants of permission within cooling-off period depend primarily on government discretion, with no codified mechanism.
\n
- If a senior bureaucrat served for decades in the government and wanted to move out towards a corporate role, he/she faces much disapproval without any reason.
\n

\n\n

What needs to be done?

\n\n

\n
- A recommendation of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the DoPT called for early retirement if interested in post-retirement private service.
\n
- A private member's bill, The Prevention and Management of Conflict of Interest Bill was introduced in 2012.
\n
- These recommendations and legislations need to be implemented in true spirit.
\n
- The legislation ought to cover all arms of governance, including the judiciary, the legislature and the executive.
\n
- Mandatory cooling period needs to be increased to five years, so that no undue influence can be exerted by the retired bureaucrat.
\n
- An open, public data platform enlisting all post-retirement appointments of civil servants would increase transparency.
\n
- India needs a legislation to make non-disclosure of a conflict of interest punishable.
\n
- The reasons for declining bureaucrat's requests for joining such firms need to be laid out clearly, to limit political concerns.
\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Hindu

\n

