Reforming Bureaucracy

Why in news?

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The Government is considering to step up lateral movement of experienced officers from various Central and State services at the level of joint secretary to bridge over the shortfall of experienced IAS officers eligible to be appointed to senior positions.

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What is lateral movement?

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- It is the movement of an employee from **one job to another within an organization at the same pay grade.** (Ex. From IA&AS to IAS).
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- Employees may ask for lateral transfers for a number of reasons include burnout in the employee's current duties, desire to broaden the employee's expertise or skills etc.,
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- Likewise, an organization may initiate lateral transfers for various reasons like the organization go through a reduction in force and need to move people around to focus its resources on the most mission-critical functions.
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- Such movement **not only helps an organization** through cross-training, but it also offers employees development opportunities to broaden their knowledge and enhance their professional growth.
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Why this move is a welcome one?

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- It will give opportunity to those in specialised services to move into mainstream administration and **bring their domain expertise** in specific issues into policymaking and governance.
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- It will also reverse some of the appropriation of top positions by the IAS lobby from non-IAS services over the last few decades.
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- A **diversity of experiences** and domain expertise, together can ensure that policies have a better connect with ground realities, and get implemented more efficiently.
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What needs to be done?

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- Simply increasing the body count is not enough. **Capability and skills,** particularly in the middle-to-top echelons of the bureaucracy, have to be improved urgently.
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- **Direct hires of experienced professionals from the private sector,** as is the practice in many developed nations such as the US, is also required, if governance delivery is to meet the needs of a complex and rapidly evolving economy.
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- The Government could define either a certain number or certain positions in the administrative structure to be filled by lateral hires.
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- The appointments to such positions should be widely advertised to attract the best.
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- The Government must also put in place a **system to review and suitably reward** outstanding performance of such appointees to attract more such talent.
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- Above all, both the bureaucracy and the political class need to recognise that the time for old style governance where policymaking is mostly in the domain of the administrative structure is no longer either effective or efficient.
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- It might be time to revisit the concept of a unified civil service — a one-

size-fits-all bureaucracy, recruited through a dated competitive examination system.
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Source: Business Line

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