Strengthening the Bureaucracy

Why in news?

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- India’s failure to attain peace in Internal and external aggression is emblematic of a serious deficiency on both counts amongst independent India’s rulers and administrators.
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- India is facing severe internal and external threats; the Bureaucratic establishments are in the stage of strengthening.
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What is the background of the issue?

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- In 1920, ICS officer Frank Brayne undertook the “Gurgaon experiment”, which included campaigns to eradicate open defecation, malaria, plague and rural indebtedness.
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- Brayne tried to impose “disciplined defecation” via trench latrines and self-help, but his experiment failed.
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- The success of Swachh Bharat will, however, remain contingent upon its implementation by Brayne’s Indian successors.
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- It is historically evident that Innovation in policy making and implementing new polices can be carried out only by young Bureaucrats.
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- Today, when the nation is stressed by grave security threats, and the government’s reaction is in a passive mode.
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- There is a need to undertake an agonising reappraisal of our national modus operandi.
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What are the Present problems in India?

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- At the outset, it must be acknowledged that India’s grandstanding on the international stage remains meaningless as long as its deep internal instabilities persist.
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- Apart from enduring insurgencies in the Northeast and the spiralling unrest in Kashmir, the most serious internal security threat arises from the armed Naxalite insurgency running across half of India’s 29 states.
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- Each of these “running sores” is evidence of dereliction, by successive governments, of their duty to assimilate alienated citizens, implement agrarian reform and deliver social justice to the poor, the deprived and adivasis.
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What is the role of civil servants in governance?

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- Government is not a disembodied entity but an organisation run by 104 secretary-rank civil servants in New Delhi.
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- They are the administrative heads of its 53 ministries and 51 departments, act as principal advisors to ministers and draft policies for them.
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- Given the complete preoccupations of politicians with electoral politics, secretaries are also responsible for implementation of policies.
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- The critical role of civil servants as a central pillar of national governance cannot be underrated because they are also key players in local administration as well as development programmes for rural and remote border areas.
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- The hallmarks of an ICS officer were his integrity, commitment to the empire, and paternal attitude towards people in his care; but we seek, in vain, similar qualities in our civil servants.
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- A more committed bureaucracy could have been the agent of development and change, for a better, more secure India.

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What are downfalls faced by civil servants?

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- Administrative shortcomings of successive governments have been compounded by their propensity to treat problems, rooted in alienation and socio-economics, as “law and order” issues.
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- Most instances of internal unrest originate in political venality, malfeasance and apathy, at which point the politicians panic and throw poorly trained police forces at it.
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- After the failure of government, civil administration and police to control the situation, the area is declared “disturbed” and the military asked to restore order, invoking the Armed Forces Special Powers Act.
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- In the case of anti-Naxal operations, however, the military has firmly refused to be drawn in.
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- The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) was designated the home ministry’s “lead counter-insurgency force” and deployed on anti-Naxal operations in 2008.
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- Since then, in an alarming sequence of near-identical Naxalite ambushes, the force repeatedly suffered heavy casualties.
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- The Indian Police Service (IPS) officers, who fill the majority of CRPF command posts, are not trained for combat; hence, they are not with their men when they walk into ambushes.
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- Heavy casualties amongst our brave armed-police forces point to a flawed leadership template, which needs urgent change.
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What is the Way forward?

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- From economy to social cohesion, India doesn’t present a very stable image.
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- Doing the same thing over and over again, but expecting different results, is not very smart.
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- The failure to resolve endemic problems for 70 years, using the same complacent people and outdated methods, should cause a re-think amongst our political leadership.
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- Innovative solutions will emerge only if fresh minds are enlisted into government; from business, industry, academia and the professions including the military to reinforce the crumbling pillars of the Indian state.
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- Finally, the weakness of the Indian state lies in a neglected and dysfunctional defence industry, entrusted exclusively to scientists and generalist bureaucrats.
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Source: The Indian Express

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