The Need for Leaders

What is the issue?

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The government is looking for not only civil servant or expert but also for more leaders, who are being assessed for their role & ability to sell reforms to the outside world.

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What is the present situation?

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· Before 2017 is over, there would be more officers of the central government who would have traded their specialised roles to take over new leadership roles than at any time in the past.

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· For instance, some of the IAS officers would be learning the challenges of collecting service tax, a job till now reserved for their customs and central excise service.

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· Non-railway officers would be poring over the railway budget.

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· And trade negotiations with foreign countries will now draw in officers from outside the Indian Foreign Service.

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· The changing roles show a new trend in the working of the government at the senior level.

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· Instead of domain expertise, it is the ability to lead and deliver that is becoming important.

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How is the ground situation changing?

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· “There is a rationalisation of roles happening within the central government”.

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· This is just the type of role that suits one service the most: the IAS.

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· But there is a shortage of IAS officers within the government (23 per cent, according to the department of personnel and training).

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· Surprisingly the new job definition is also attracting more ambitious officers from other services to these positions.

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· The job requirement is that the candidates have to own up for their deliverables and be willing to lead large teams.

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· At the level of joint secretary and above, a 360-degree approach is being taken to assess the officers.

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· A result of that assessment is that out of the under 300 joint secretaries in various ministries, about a third are now from other services.

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What should be done?

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· To get over this shortage, the department of personnel and training has increased the number of entrants into IAS through the civil services examination to 180 in the past four years, from an average of less than 60.

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· Simultaneously, the overall intake into all services through the combined civil services examination has risen to 1209 in 2016-17 from an average of less than 500 from 2000 to 2005.

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· IAS officers have an advantage in this respect since they are trained to handle leadership roles from the time they are recruited.

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· Yet to make the changes effective, political support is essential, "While they need to show expertise in their domain, they can show ownership of policies only if the political party in power backstops them".

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· The Jan Dhan drive, is a good example of such support.

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· There is a need to install effective leaders and make specialists report to them, cutting across departments.

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Source: Business Standard

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