



## *Administrative Reforms*

- Department of Administrative Reforms
- Public Grievances Commission



## **Department of Administrative Reforms**

The Department of Administrative Reforms is one of the most important departments in the Delhi Government. The main aim is to provide good governance and bring in culture of transparency, accountability and provide citizen friendly services. The Department has gained significance in the wake of Delhi Right to Information Act, 2001 and the recent introduction of national Right to Information Act, 2005. The mission of Administrative Reforms Department is to suggest remedial measures for economy in government expenditure, improve government functioning through administrative reforms in the spheres of restructuring the government, improving processes, organization and methods, handling grievance, promoting modernization, citizen's charters, implementing the Delhi Right to Information Act and Rules, award schemes, inculcating discipline amongst staff through regular punctuality drives and other good governance practices.

On the recommendations of the First Administrative Reforms Commission, a small cell was created in Delhi Administration to look after issues relating to administrative reforms and staff assessment studies. Its role was extended periodically by including new activities like O&M studies, office inspections, and redressal of public grievances. With the enactment of Lok Ayukta and Upalokayukta Act in 1995, it became its secretarial Department. It set up a Public Grievances Commission through a Resolution in 1997 and was declared as its Secretariat Department. With the enactment of Delhi Right to Information Act, 2001 it became the nodal agency for coordinating and monitoring the functions of DRTI Act, 2001. It has been declared as an independent department in April 2005 and it now enjoys administrative and financial powers.

### **Organisational Structure and Responsibilities**

A Secretary heads the Department. The Secretary is subordinated by a Deputy Director followed by four Assistant Directors. There are six Research Assistants and three investigators. There are 18 employees in

the Department in all and they have a requirement of around 40 employees. Considering the work that has been delegated to the Department, it would be feasible to recruit more employees in the Department

The Department caters to various departments of Delhi Government, autonomous bodies/ public sector undertakings, and nodal authorities like Municipal Corporation of Delhi, New Delhi Municipal Council, Delhi Cantonment Board as well as citizens with its grievances against Delhi Government and its allied institutions. The Department primarily extends policy support to all the Delhi Government departments. The issues that the Department addresses are:

- Administrative reforms
- Re-organisation of department
- Officers inspections
- Redressal of public grievances
- Good governance activities
- Right to Information Acts
- Secretariat functions of Lokayukta Office
- Secretariat functions of Public Grievances Commission
- Incentive schemes for officers and staff in the field of administrative reforms
- Conducting departmental tests/ examination about O&M.
- Monitoring of punctuality in attendance and surprise inspections.
- Empanelment of consultant for projects and studies concerning administrative reforms
- Nodal agency for citizen charters
- Business process re-engineering

### **Financial Profile**

The General Administration Department had the financial powers of the Department till April 2005, after which the Department has obtained both administrative and financial power. The approved outlay of the Department has been marginal when compared to other departments of Delhi. The major allocation was in the financial year 2003-04 when Rs 500 lac was allotted for E-governance project handled by the Department. The non-plan budget for the year 2005-06 is Rs 50 lac and

Rs 4 lac has been allocated for strengthening of the Department under plan schemes.

### **Assignments**

The important assignments that are handled by the Department are discussed briefly here under:

- The Delhi Government introduced the Delhi Right to Information in 2001 in order to get information from the Government with minimum hassles and procedures. The Act guarantees that the information, which can be given to citizens, will be provided within 30 days and in case it is denied then the applicant will get a rejection letter with cogent reasons for rejection of the application within the prescribed period. The applicant, if dissatisfied with the reasons and information provided, has the right to appeal in Public Grievances Commission. The Act provides for a unique provision for punitive action against the officials in the form of fine of Rs 50 per day for delay and Rs 1000 for tendering wrong information.
- The Department provides secretarial functions for provisions of budget, employees to the Delhi Lokayukta formed under the Uplokayukta Act, 1995. The reports prepared by the Department are submitted in the Legislative Assembly. It also provides the same services to the Public Grievances Commission that attends to public grievances in respect of all departments, autonomous bodies of Delhi Government, including Delhi Police.
- The Administrative Reforms Department appoints consultants on contract basis in order to expedite various studies and to improve the working of departments with respect to processes and procedures of Delhi Government. It also conducts punctuality drives and surprise checking. Annual inspections are conducted as per provisions of Manual of Office Procedures so that the shortcomings can be identified and rectified by the respective departments.
- The concept of Citizens Charter has been introduced by 75 departments/ offices of Delhi Government. Other departments have also been requested to adopt similar charters. A study of existing charter has been done both by Administrative Reforms

Department and Transparency International India to further improve these charters.

- The Department redresses the problems and grievances of citizens against departments and also ensures prompt disposal of pension cases.

As mentioned before, the Department of Administrative Reforms is one of the nodal agencies in implementing the Delhi Right to Information, 2001. They have gained more responsibility after the national Right to Information Act, 2005. Some the data regarding the implementation and success of the Act as obtained from the Secretary, Department of Administrative Reforms, Prakash Kumar does not paint a good picture. The data and conclusions were arrived at after a detailed analysis of around 2500 RTI applications filed in Delhi.

The status of the implementation of Delhi Right to Information Act can be gauged from the application received and disposed of by the departments. According to the AR Department, people have been active in about 50 public dealing organisations in Delhi. 9,060 applications have been received since the commencement of the Act out of which 8,581 (95%) have been disposed off as on 30 September 2005. Out of 8,581, information was provided in 7692 (90 %) cases. The analysis of 2500 applications showed that 53 percent of the cases were related to personal grievances and 33 percent related to general public issues where as 14 percent of the cases concerned policy matters. In 87 percent of the total cases, information was available with the departments where as in the rest the information had to be collected/ compiled.

Organisations where citizens are most active are Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), Cooperative societies, Divisional Commissioner's Office, Transport Department, Food and Civil Supplies as well as the Education Department. The satisfaction ratio in relation to responses from these departments has been very low, ranging from 36 % with MCD to 13 % with the Cooperative Societies. There is a need for a more aggressive and competent role of the AR department in enforcing the Act with efficiency and effectiveness so that the purpose of the Act is fulfilled.

### **Suggestions**

Even though the Department has been functioning for a long time, it has gained financial and administrative control only recently. This makes a huge difference as the Department has become very significant with the introduction of Right to Information and needs financial autonomy to perform various functions. They have been dealing with the traditional administrative functions like punctuality, re-organisation, staffing and conducting exams for various recruiting departments. However with change in the way governments function today and immense emphasis on good governance and citizen awareness, the Department has a huge responsibility of introducing and implementing these good governance processes.

The Department can conduct elaborate research to find international best practices and bring it to the governance processes in Delhi. This would include the principles of transparency, accountability and processes of developing efficient public services. The process of budgeting and achieving sound budget management are some of the areas that require immediate attention and the Department has adequate resources to conduct these researches and implement them. The administrative reforms relating to civil services contract system can be introduced by the Department, where bureaucrats would be in contract with the government with pre-defined targets and performance benchmarks. The contract will be terminated for those who are unable to achieve these targets. This would ensure that the top management has strict accountability which will definitely percolate down to the lower levels due to performance oriented system.

The Department should also evolve good bidding practices. Several departments outsource their work to private contractors and thus a sound tendering and bidding system would remove corruption and malpractices. The process can be made transparent by putting up tender, all submitted bids and the selected bid with all the relevant details on the website of the department and on the Delhi Government website. The 'Two Bid System' for selecting the tender bid is better and less prone to corruption. In this system, bidders submit separate financial and technical bids. First, the best technical bid is chosen and then financial bids are open to those best technical bidders. The officials reviewing the process can be different to reduce the possibility of a possible collusion.

There are other good governance practices that can be implemented by the Department like cross auditing of the departments for evaluating their performance, enforcing strict rules for compiling and publishing annual reports for each department and an online complaint management system with efficient use of information technology. A concept of 'Report Card' should also be introduced so that public services can be assessed from the citizens' perspective. Thus, if good governance practices are consciously implemented, it can lead to marked change in governance systems in Delhi.

—*Sonia Mahajan and Rasbi Khandelwal*

### References

Website of Administrative Reforms Department: <http://ar.delhigovt.nic.in/ar1/index.htm>

Website of Right to Information on Delhi Government Website: <http://delhigovt.nic.in/rti/default.asp>.

Officials of the Administrative reforms Department

