

## An Administrative Note\*

by Masood Hasan

*The Government of Pakistan is thinking of creating a super administrative group to be called the Executive Service of Pakistan (ESP). Would the mere creation of the ESP help solve our basic problem of maladministration or will it just raise the level of the same? asks Masood Hasan*

It is of interest to note in a recent report that the Government of Pakistan is thinking of creating a super administrative group to be called the Executive Service of Pakistan (ESP). This is apparently meant to break the old ICS/CSP/DMG "monopoly" of most of the top jobs.

In October 1978 President Carter set up for senior officers (General) Schedule 16 and above, Senior Executive Service (SEP) which aimed at having a management team for each operating agency. It was, at that time, expected that up to 50 per cent of those in ESP could earn up to 20 per cent of their annual salary in bonuses. This was an effort to safeguard against political abuse. The Civil Service Commission was to have been succeeded by the Office of Personnel Management along with a bipartisan independent Merit Systems Protection Board with enough muscle to prevent political mischief. This of course required a new method of evaluating job performance, which implies the need for position descriptions. Those of SEP who did not measure up were, according to the plan, to be demoted to General Schedule 15. It was also expected that it would take 5 to 6 years to flesh out the programme i.e. establish the organics ie the system and procedures, which would determine its success or otherwise.

Our Administrative Reforms of 1973 set out ostensibly to do the right thing. What it achieved was to "eliminate" the CSP, but had nothing better to offer in return. This resulted in more or less an administrative breakdown. There was no transitional plan (unsteady state) leading up to routinisation (steady state). In any case it appears that the District Management Group came out on top. But not for those whose interest was only in making money in some of the other groups. What is there to prevent the ESP, after a few years, from becoming what the DMG became? After all, control is exercised by the Establishment Division whose reputation in doing what elementary personnel administration demands is well known to all. No leadership can be expected of and from this agency as it cannot command respect.

Would the mere creation of the ESP help solve our basic problem of maladministration or will it just raise the level of the same? It does not need extra-sensory perception to come to a conclusion. The need to be thoroughly familiar at the operational level of what and why goes on is essential, otherwise policy or strategy will be at loggerheads with the inertia of the basically Victorian system.

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We need to be transparently clear: are we looking for prevention and cure rolled into one or not? The methodology is not the same for both. In our efforts to do the right thing we must realise that just as devaluation has a positive short term effect depending, among others, on the finished stocks of exportable value added goods that are immediately encashable advantageously. Similarly, in setting up of the ESP do we have a ready stock of well trained personnel to take care of the immediate requirements (short-term). To move speedily the need for a clear strategy is essential (in both the civil and military) so that operative moves are not made in an ad hoc fashion. This definition must be transparent. To lose the initial advantage means settling down to a higher plateau of inefficiency.

The thinking that goes into the formulation of the ESP is that we need more of the same. The results of such disjointed incrementalism will certainly give us much more of the same! We need a qualitative change. Since performance is ultimately compelled through accountability we need to look at it.

Discipline reinforces faith and provides the basis for unity. The brand of accountabilities we have ie judicial and audit have failed miserably. If accountability succeeds in industry and the military, it is because accountability is taken care of through the line function, through the use of staff functions such as quality control (QC). QC never reports to the production manager but higher up and that too through a separate ladder. The chief executive knows how to introduce measures to prevent the wrong things from happening before breakdown. Both the law and audit have to wait for breakdown and hence are totally ineffective in generating the enabling environment to take/make decisions based on incomplete evidence without the benefit of hindsight.

It is, therefore, essential if we are to improve our administrative function in government to set up Administrative Courts as envisaged in Article 216 of our provisional constitution of 1972 and not try to get by with Article 212 of our current Constitution. Article 216 puts administrative accountability fairly and squarely within the executive (where there would be provision for appeal). Article 212 puts administrative accountability finally in the judicial lap. Knowing what litigation implies in Pakistan the results must be what we are very well aware of. What is required is an Ordinance to scrap Article 212 of our Constitution and substitute in with Article 216 of the provisional constitution of 1972. Any executive who has to make decisions with knowledge of the possibility, let us say not of punishment, but just of exposure only is compelled over a period of time to give fair and equitable decisions. This is what prevention implies.

Let us, therefore, think deeply before making what could ultimately be a cosmetic change at higher cost, finally giving a dog a bad name and then kicking it.

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