

**Speech of Hon'ble Chairman UPSC on the occasion of the 93rd
Foundation Day Celebrations, on 01.10.2019**

Hon'ble colleague Members of the Commission, Hon'ble former Chairmen and Members of the Commission, officers and staff of the UPSC, distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen.

Warm felicitations on the 93rd Foundation Day of the Union Public Service Commission.

2. As always, we are especially grateful to the former Hon'ble Chairmen and Members of the Commission for gracing this occasion and re-enforcing the Commission's core foundation of tradition and continuity – a foundation, which gives the UPSC its robust image of reliability and for maintaining the highest standards of probity. The Commission continues to be a staid and consistent institution, meeting new challenges, while remaining single-mindedly focused on fulfilling its Constitutional mandate. As we build on your vision and contributions, let me also salute the hard and sincere work put in by the Secretariat's officers and all members of the staff.

3. Ladies and Gentlemen, I have been with the Commission for over four years now and have had the privilege to serve as its Chairman for over 15 months. During this period I have met hundreds of senior officers, both serving and retired, as well as an equally large number of eminent persons from various academic and professional fields. One observation which has dominated all discussions about the Commission is its image of integrity and impartiality. I have been asked by several visitors, including some well-meaning retired bureaucrats who are personally engaged in programs for reinforcing the spirit of honesty in the civil services, as to how the UPSC maintains its high standards of integrity. Some of them even wanted to conduct studies into our working to see if they could learn something which could be supplanted in other government bodies. You will all appreciate that while I politely discouraged any formal study, I did agree to sit with them and share some home truths. My belief is as follows: "The rich and diverse professional backgrounds, the acumen and wisdom and the highest standards of integrity, which our Honorable Members bring to the Commission, along with their active oversight over all of its functions, provides the base on which we have constructed this institution. Officers and staff who join the Commission on deputation or as permanent staff members imbibe this spirit. They find themselves in a positive and nurturing work culture, free from outside interference, where they excel in mastering relevant rules and regulations and are encouraged to fearlessly record their examination of issues. We continue to look upon public grievances, RTI queries and all manner of Court cases as useful independent oversight mechanisms which help ensure that our decisions are, to the best of our ability, correct at all times. All of this perhaps gives this venerable institution a unique DNA of its own – a DNA which overrides the personalities of all its constituents".

4. We are in a happy position today as the Commission has its full complement of ten Honorable Members who truly believe in a free and frank exchange of ideas, constant and untiring dialogue and are committed to further strengthen the fair name of the Commission. We strive to preserve the tradition of reaching our decisions through consensus.

5. Let me start with a review of our functions, i.e. holding examinations, recruitments and deputations, DPCs and of course giving advice on disciplinary cases. This work continues smoothly. We are placing more and more information on our websites and making online procedures more comprehensive - dovetailing them with our office processes, to get seamless examination of applications. To take the increasing load of online work, including handling of more data-rich applications, we have moved our website from MTNL to the NICs cloud 'Meghraj' w.e.f. November 29, 2018. This has enhanced the capacity of our website and also provides better security of data. Several new programs have been developed in-house, to handle issues of venue management, transliteration of names from English to Hindi, public disclosure of information about candidates, mechanical short listing of candidates on the basis of Detailed Application Forms etc. The option of voluntary withdrawal of applications has been extended to more examinations. An increasing number of screening tests are now being administered through Computer Based Written Tests. The spirit behind all these endeavors is to make the examinations more candidate-friendly.

6. Our Recruitment Rules Formulation, Amendment and Monitoring System (RRFAMS) was successfully launched on December 3, 2018 and all proposals related to RRs are now being received on-line from DoP&T. These are examined on our Local Area Network (LAN) and the Commission's advice is also sent to the Ministries or Departments on-line, thereby eliminating most of the paperwork and human interface in the entire process. We hope to extend this system to Union Territories and other Statutory Organizations also in the next 2 to 3 months.

7. Disciplinary cases constitute a large proportion of the Commission's work. The Commission has proactively interacted with the DoP&T and various Ministries to expedite disposal of these cases. An e-appointment system under the single window arrangement has been put in place w.e.f. November 20, 2018 to receive cases with all required material. The Commission also took the initiative to hold workshops for officers of various Ministries and Departments to help them submit their cases correctly. 128 officers from these Ministries and Departments have so far attended the workshops - which has led to an increased inflow of cases. The Commission issued 493 Advice Letters during 2018-19, which is roughly two Advice Letters every working day. This was the highest number in eleven years. Other activities have also been streamlined. As an example, 440 DPC meetings were held in 2018-19 recommending 5,463 officers for promotion. This is significantly higher than corresponding figures for the previous year which stood at 363 DPC Meetings to promote 3,280 officers. This shows a jump of almost 60% more promotions.

We do hope this will give some boost to the motivation levels in the bureaucracy.

8. I have mentioned the work done only in a few branches and divisions as an illustration. I am sure, and it goes without saying, that each one of our officers and staff members has contributed to the smooth and efficient running of the Commission's work, despite the shortage of staff in some cases. I extend the Commission's heartfelt gratitude to each and every one of you.

9. The UPSC Museum housing valuable documents and other archival material continues to draw visitors in large numbers. I am happy to inform that since its inception in November 2016, the Museum has received 11, 253 visitors. This of course does not take into account an unknown number of interested persons who might have taken the virtual tour of this Museum on the Commission's website. Some digitized archival material has been made available on the virtual tour site, which has been appreciated and found useful by some researchers and academics. All Annual Reports of the Commission from 1950-51 up to 2017-18 have now been digitized and are also available on our website.

10. Efforts are continuing to improve the physical facilities and infrastructure on the campus. The new landscaped garden in front of the Commission building, with an artistically laid out walking track, has been welcomed by our advisors staying with us as a welcome addition, where they are able to walk in the morning or take a stroll in the evening after a hard day's work. Among other improvements, we are also renovating our Board Rooms for interviews in the Ayog Sachivalay building. Two of the four rooms are, in fact, ready for being put to use with effect from today. A dedicated Control Room for monitoring of all examinations is now functioning in the Examination Halls Building. Recognizing the Commission's growing requirement for space, the Government has in principle agreed to provide around two Acres of additional land to the UPSC, either from the Jamnagar House hutments area or from the Kota House Complex. We propose to construct State of the Art IT enabled Examination Halls, a modern Library, a well laid out Museum, Conference Halls and new accommodation for our advisers, in addition to other facilities required by the Commission.

11. The Commission has been continuously looking at its own systems and has been open to discussion and suggestions for improvements in critical areas like conduct of examinations, recruitment and evaluation through interviews. Members of the Commission now routinely meet before all major interview seasons to define what traits of personality we are looking for in any particular interview and how Advisors will be requested to give a sharper focus to the interviews. This also helps us achieve greater uniformity and consistency across multiple boards. We are in touch with institutions like the Administrative Staff College of India (ASCI), Hyderabad, the Defense Institute for Psychological Research (DIPR), Delhi as well as Psychology Departments of a few leading Universities to keep ourselves abreast of latest developments in the field of assessment of personality traits.

12. Regarding examination and recruitment work, we have been able to depute our officers to visit the Public Service Commissions and related recruitment bodies in Canada, UK, France and Singapore to understand how these bodies are innovating and handling their responsibilities. Two officers also attended a training program at the University of Cambridge, to understand latest technological advances in conducting large tests across vast geographical areas. We have been trying to get some insight on how we can cope with the increasing number of candidates in some of our exams. The number of applicants, for example, in this year's Civil Services Preliminary Exam has crossed 11 Lakhs. On-line examinations for first stage screening, administering of tests on multiple dates for the same exam are some of the areas we might need to look at in future. A committee of Hon. Members is preparing a Vision Document which will go into these emerging challenges and study new technological innovations which we may need to consider in future.

13. Our interaction with Public Service Commissions and similar institutions in various countries, for sharing of information and best practices continues. In the last 15 months, the UPSC was happy to receive delegations from Bhutan, Malaysia, Afghanistan, Mauritius, Nepal, Zimbabwe, Australia, the Czech Republic and the Maldives. The UPSC has also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Civil Service Council of Mongolia on July 3, 2019 in New Delhi, when the Chairman of the Council visited us. Also on the anvil is a conference of Chairmen and Members of Public Service Commissions of SAARC countries.

14. Ladies and Gentlemen, tomorrow is the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi. Last year I had mentioned how proud we were to have an iconic bronze statue of Bapu in a meditative pose, in the main entrance foyer of the Commission Building. Several of our guests have admired this beautiful statue, and of course we feel happy about it. However, a few days ago while coming to the office I noticed a member of our staff touching the feet of the statue as he was coming in for work. On checking I found that this gentleman had been doing so regularly for the last several months - and that he was not the only one! There were several others, from amongst us, who were starting their day bowing before the Father of the Nation. This gives us hope, and the conviction, to forge ahead with our work and contribute towards building a bureaucracy, which, in turn, will be committed to building a better and a more humane India – an India which is not only prosperous, but is also sensitive to the needs of the downtrodden and the underprivileged. We have our job cut out for us.

15. Allow me to thank all of you once again for gracing this occasion.

THANK YOU & JAI HIND.