

## PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION WEEKLY APRIL WEEK 2)

This initiative will help students in interlinking current affairs with Paper 1 and Paper 2 while doing answer writing. These examples can be directly used in mains answers.

Public Administration

By

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' **CASE STUDY** - LG Listening Post - A dedicated cell within the Delhi LG Secretariat has been established to process complaints submitted through multiple channels. So far, several issues, particularly those affecting civic bodies have been addressed, signaling a commitment to resolving both minor and significant civic problems. By providing mobile apps (Android/iOS) and web portals, the system moves grievance submission from physical offices to the "doorstep" of the citizen

Quote of the week - "The most important thing in communication is to hear what isn't being said." - Peter Drucker

### LONGEST-SERVING HEADS OF GOVERNMENT

2 **PAWAN KUMAR CHAMLING**  
8,930 days  
Sikkim CM  
(1994-2019)



3 **NAVEEN PATNAIK**  
8,865 days  
Odisha CM  
(2000-24)



4 **JYOTI BASU**  
8,539 days  
West Bengal CM  
(1977-2000)



5 **GEGONG APANG**  
8,286 days  
Arunachal Pradesh CM  
(1980-99, 2003-07)

**Context** - The Prime Minister Tenure Debate, Dr B.R. Ambedkar emphasised the concept of "daily accountability" through parliamentary mechanisms such as question hour, no-confidence motions, and adjournment motions. He argued that these mechanisms were more effective than periodic elections in ensuring executive responsibility. India has developed an informal convention limiting the President to two terms, despite the Constitution not mandating such a restriction thus following in the spirit of Aristotle's idea that citizens should take turns being the ruler and the ruled. The introduction of the Tenth Schedule through the 52nd Constitutional Amendment in 1985 significantly weakened the effectiveness of no-confidence motions, as ruling party members are unlikely to vote against their own government as a result, the primary mechanism envisioned by the framers to check executive power has been diluted.

# Petty Power, Real Harm

*Why the constable and the clerk behave the way they do – and what the state can actually do about it.*



OP SINGH

FORMER DGP, HARYANA



**T**here is a particular kind of humiliation that most Indians have experienced but few can name. You walk into a police station or a government office – educated, taxpaying, perhaps better-dressed than the person behind the desk – and within thirty seconds you are made to feel small. The constable does not look up. The clerk waves you away mid-sentence. You wait. You return. You wait again. You say sir to a man who earns a third of what you do. And somewhere in the exchange, you understand, wordlessly, that he knows exactly what he is doing.

But here is what I also know. Last year, at the North India Inter-State Council meeting at Surajkund, several senior IAS officers told me something that surprised them. While driving through Gurugram, they had been stopped at police nakabandis. The constables had addressed them respectfully, requested permission to search the vehicle, apologised for the inconvenience, and thanked them for cooperation. These were not anecdotes of exception. They were evidence that change, when it comes from the top with genuine intent, can reach all the way to the roadside barrier.

Many states have tried soft-skills training. It has not worked, and it will not work, because training addresses manner without touching cause. The cause is structural, and it has a name.

India's constables and government clerks occupy one of the most psychologically volatile positions in any society. They sit at the very bottom of their organisational ladders, yet they face the public armed with enormous discretionary authority. Constables make up eighty-five per cent of the Indian police. Most will retire at or below the rank of Sub-Inspector, regardless of qualification or years of service.

The clerk in the revenue office is no different – overworked, underpaid, invisible to his superiors, and yet the sole gatekeeper between a citizen and whatever the citizen needs.

In 1954, the American sociologist Gerhard Lenski gave this condition its name: status inconsistency. When a person's social dimensions are out of alignment – when power is high but rank is low, when authority is real but recognition is absent – the psychological strain does not stay internal. It turns outward. The constable who makes you stand while he sits, the clerk who loses your file and blames you for it – they are not simply being difficult. They are asserting over you the dominance that the rest of their working lives deny them. Their uniform gives them power the institution gives them no dignity to match. That gap is the engine of every unpleasant encounter at the thana gate and the government counter.

Powerlessness also breeds something darker. A landmark 2021 study by Swaab and colleagues, published in *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, found across five controlled experiments that low power – not high power – reliably increases paranoia, which in turn drives aggression. The clerk who suspects every applicant of trying to bypass him, the constable who treats every complainant as a potential troublemaker – these are not personality defects. They are predictable responses to structural vulnerability. When you spend your working life uncertain whether your superiors notice you, whether your rank will ever change, the citizen at the counter – perhaps wealthier, perhaps better-educated – becomes the most convenient target for that accumulated anxiety.

The architecture of this problem is colonial and deliberate. The Po-

lice Act of 1861 – written to govern a subject population – still governs, in most states, the terms under which a constable meets a citizen in 2025. Michael Lipsky, whose 1980 work *Street-Level Bureaucracy* remains the foundational text on front-line public workers, argued that these men and women “hold the keys to a dimension of citizenship.” The constable and the clerk are not minor functionaries. In that moment of encounter, they are the entire republic. The republic, however, has spent a hundred and sixty years treating them as instruments of control – tools pointed at the citizen rather than toward them.

When I took charge as Director General of Police, Haryana, I asked myself where to begin. Training programmes existed. Sensitisation workshops had been held. Behaviour had not changed.

I started with status. I told the constabulary – directly, and in writing – that they were the most important rank in the Indian Police. They receive the lowest pay, take the maximum risk, and work the longest hours. I wanted them to hear that from their head before they were asked for anything.

I then wrote to every rank, in Hindi, in two hundred words, starting with the jawans. We work for the people, at their cost. Meet citizens where they are. Be gentle with those who obey the law willingly. Take no coercive action for a bonafide, inadvertent violation. Citizens who come to a police station are having a difficult day. Offer them a chair. Offer them a cup of tea. Look at your thana through their eyes – does the gate say come in or keep out?

The response was not what sceptics predicted. These are, in the main, good people inside a broken system. They respond when leadership speaks to their dignity rather than merely demanding their compliance. The problem has never been the constable's

character. It has been the silence of those above him – a silence that, over decades, becomes permission.

But goodwill from the top has a shelf life. Durable change requires something the state has so far declined to provide: a redesign of what gets rewarded.

The proof that incentive redesign works comes from an unlikely place. After Georgia's 2003 Rose Revolution, President Saakashvili inherited a police force so corrupt that citizens considered contact with it a hazard. He fired thirty thousand officers and rebuilt from scratch, dramatically raising salaries and tying retention to conduct and merit. Within six years – documented by Princeton University's *Innovations for Successful Societies* programme – that force ranked as the third most trusted institution in the country, behind only the Church and the Army. The salary hike mattered. But what mattered more was that officers were given something to lose by behaving badly, and something to gain by behaving well. The incentive geometry changed. So did the behaviour.

India's departments must follow the same logic. A clerk who clears files without harassment, a constable who treats a marginalised complainant with dignity – these acts must be formally cited, tangibly rewarded, and systematically celebrated. Lenski's insight was that status inconsistency poisons behaviour. The corrective is not a workshop. It is to align what the institution rewards with what it claims to value. Constables must be trusted with roles in investigation, not just physical presence. Promotion must be linked to performance. A man who serves thirty years and retires at the rank he entered is not a professional. He is a labourer in uniform.

Lenski showed us why the gap between status and power corrupts. Lipsky showed us that front-line workers are the state, in practice. Swaab showed us that powerlessness, without recognition or support, turns outward – onto whoever is standing at the counter. What all three were really saying is what a good police chief knows on the first morning of his posting: you cannot ask people to give dignity they have never been shown.

Give the constable and the clerk something to gain by being good. That is the reform. Everything else is noise.

/ DAILYWORLD /

The writer is a former Director General of Police, Haryana. **FEAR TAX: THE PRICE OF PLAYING IT SAFE** is his forthcoming book.

**CASE STUDY** - How Khurpenchh became the UPSC watchdog online - Called Khurpenchh Hindi for "picking out faults" the popular X handle has built a large social media following by scrutinising the credentials of civil servants and aspirants digging into forged certificates to inflated claims of bureaucratic achievements. The Khurpenchh team operates behind pseudonyms they are whistleblower, The account's anonymity however, remains a point of contention. Khurpenchh's administrators say we want to become a change-maker. We want to create an open source, public data portal where people can easily see the report card of their area. Through campaigns like "Ye Thik Karke Dikhao" (Show us you can fix this) they have used crowdsourced photos and videos to pressure local administrators into fixing broken infrastructure like roads and schools. By using social media to highlight governance failures Khurpench acts as the environment that constantly interacts with the administrative system by putting pressure on it which thus forcing it to be responsive rather than just rule-bound also (Systems theory) also as Mohit Bhattacharya identifies e-Governance as a tool to reduce corruption and empower citizens Khurpench leverages the digital platforms to bridge the information gap between the state and the public thus strengthening the "authority of citizens" highlighted by Dwight Waldo in the book "Administrative State" in form of the inherent tension between the authority of citizens (democracy) and the authority of officials (bureaucracy)



# STAFFING SHORTAGES

**Context** - Staffing shortage becoming a governance Failure - India is facing a critical shortage of nearly 1,300 Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers, with vacancies representing roughly 20% of the sanctioned strength and severely hindering governance and welfare delivery. A parliamentary panel has highlighted this "quiet normalisation" of the deficit, which leads to overworked staff and slower decision-making across state especially For a system that still relies heavily on a generalist administrative elite to deliver everything from welfare schemes to crisis response, this is not a small problem. With 20% fewer officers, the "Span of Control" for existing seniors expands beyond manageable limits, leading to supervision fatigue and a breakdown in oversight also as highlighted by New Public Administration A thin-stretched bureaucracy becomes defensive and clings to rules just to survive the workload. It stops being a "change agent" and becomes a barrier to changes required in Society thus losing its relevance.

**Context** - Large-scale transfers of senior IAS/IPS officers in poll-bound states - The Election Commission of India is mandated to conduct elections not run governments, it should exercise its powers with transparency and discretion thus upholding India's democratic principles rather than acting like a governing body. Critics argue that neither the Representation of the People Act, 1950/1951 nor the All India Services Act, 1951 explicitly empowers the ECI to transfer state officers unilaterally, raising questions about whether the ECI is exceeding its jurisdiction. The ECI defends its actions by citing the need to prevent "poll violence" and ensure officials do not influence the electoral process in favor of the ruling party. Administrative thinker Elton Mayo would view these transfers as a blow to informal organization and group morale. Branding a group of officers as unfit for election duty creates a climate of suspicion. According to Mayo a demotivated uprooted bureaucrat will perform poorly regardless of the neutrality.