

3. Bringing transparency into and streamlining Government functioning

3.1 Decentralisation of powers

By unnecessary centralisation it not only delays the decision process but also saps the initiative and accountability at the lower levels. Many a times powers are centralised for fear of the lower functionaries indulging in corruption. However, over centralising is not a solution. It is therefore proposed that powers should be delegated adequately with an effective check on how they are being exercised through office inspections etc.

A thorough review of the present level of delegations will be taken and within six months delegation of powers will be completed.

3.2 Making inspections more efficient

Earlier, subordinate offices were inspected regularly. This helped to identify the deficiencies and curb undesirable practises. However, because of increased responsibilities, senior officers have not been systematically inspecting the lower echelons. It is proposed to re-introduce effective inspections wherever there has been no practice and vigorously implement the system of inspection.

3.3 Simplification of rules

One of the main reasons for increase in corruption is the complexity of government rules and procedures. Because the common man does not understand the government functioning, it encourages middle-men who indulge in corruption.

3.3.1 In order to overcome this situation it is suggested that all rules, especially those where public interaction is frequent, should be reviewed and re-written. The exercise aims at placing more trust in the public so that the current picture of 'Government versus Public' is transformed into

a scenario where the common man identifies himself with administration. The more important offices are expected to complete this revision in six months while the rest of the departments will do so in one year.

3.3.2 Along with simplification of rules, it is necessary to bring in transparency. If the common man understands the purpose behind framing of various rules, it will lead to more awareness and better compliance.

3.3.3 The Marathi language used in government offices is complicated and unnatural. The rules are basically a translation of the English version and copy the sentence structure. In order to rectify this the drafting will be done in easy-to-understand Marathi language.

3.3.4 Simplification, transparency and translation will be done in next one year.

3.4 Review of tender documents

3.4.1 It is a common complaint that corruption is most common while approving tenders. It is proposed to review the tender procedures so as to make the exercise more transparent, while at the same time maintaining quality and ensuring reasonable rates.

3.4.2 Tenders are normally published in the economical newspapers, because of which adequate publicity is not achieved. Appropriate norms will be set to link the value of the tender with the cost of the advertisement. Many a times complete specifications and parameters are not clarified. Similarly the desired capacity of the tenderer is not indicated. This results in difficulty while scrutinising tenders and leads to corruption.

The rules in this respect will be finalised in six months by all departments and State Government Undertakings Works above a certain value will need a two-part tender i.e.

technical and financial. The financial bid will be opened only if the contractor qualifies in the technical requirements. This practice already exists in quite a few departments. This will be made compulsory and scrupulously followed. Monitoring will be done from supervisory levels.

3.4.3 At present only departmental enquiries are held against those who violate tender procedures. Since this is inadequate, it is proposed to examine whether criminal prosecution can be provided for in such cases.

3.5 Steps to provide information to the public

Unless the rules are disseminated to the common man, merely their simplification will not serve any purpose. The vested interests in the current scheme of things thrive on the ignorance of the public. In order to curb corruption, it is necessary to break this 'monopoly of information'. The following steps are suggested :—

3.5.1 Information board

In the offices with frequent public contact, it should not be necessary to enquire about routine matters. Adequate information would be displayed on the boards giving the name of the office, seating plan, responsibility of various officers as also the procedure to be followed for different tasks. This will be made obligatory.

3.5.2 Information booklets

Such booklets, giving details of different schemes being implemented through the particular office, conditions of eligibility etc. will be provided in an attractive format and adequate numbers. The head of the office will be responsible for ensuring such availability within a period of six months.

3.5.3 Public relations officer

For the illiterate persons who approach government offices, information boards or booklets will not be beneficial.

In offices like the Collector's office, Zilla Parishads, Municipal councils, R.T.O.s etc., where public interaction is frequent, it is absolutely necessary to have a full time Public Relations Officer. This will be ensured within six months in all important offices throughout the State.

3.5.4 Reviewing the manuals in all departments and compiling government orders

Many of the manuals in different offices have become outdated with passage of time. Keeping in view the changed responsibilities and functions, it is necessary to rewrite such manuals. Similarly, government orders are modified from time to time and there was a practise earlier of issuing an omnibus Government Resolution, compiling the various orders. All the departments will be asked to bring out such easy to refer Compendiums within a fixed time frame.

3.5.5 Computerisation

In the current scenario, Computerisation can be said to be the most important component of bringing transparency into and streamlining the functioning of government. Transparency implies availability of information without delay and this can be achieved only through a massive programme of computerisation. For example, at present the land records are being computerised and once this process is completed, it will not be necessary for the owner to approach the talathi village revenue for obtaining a 7/12 extract (ownership and possession) of his land holding. In due course the Collector's office could centrally provide information pertaining to all departments, orders, rules etc. leading to a revolution in transparency. A working group will be established to increase the use of computers in government and make them more effective.

3.6 Fixing time frames for decision making

Besides lack of transparency, the delay in decision processes is the main cause of corruption. In certain areas

legal time limits have been prescribed. For instance, if permission for non-agricultural use of agricultural land is not granted within ninety days from the date of the application, the Land Revenue Code provides that such permission is deemed to have been granted. However, it is equally true that this is sought to be circumvented in many cases by raising some frivolous queries on the 89th day. Such misuse will have to be plugged. The time limits will be fixed in each office for different levels, in respect of each function or activity of that office and displayed prominently on the notice board. Wherever such limits are not observed, and a complaint is made to the senior officer, it will be promptly investigated and acted upon.