

*Workshop on Civil Service Reform*

*Action Plan 2008 - 2010*

**Address by Mr S. C. Seeballuck**

**Secretary to Cabinet and Head of the Civil Service**

**Tuesday 28 August 2007 at 08 45 hours**

**La Canelle, Domaine Les Pailles**

**Mr Jhugroo, Permanent Secretary**

**Our Distinguished Guests , Mr Mahalingum & Dr Rasappan**

**Colleagues Senior Chief Executives & Permanent Secretaries**

**Supervising Officers of Ministries & Heads of Depts**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

I am pleased to be in your midst this morning on the occasion of this consultative workshop for the elaboration of our third Action Plan on Civil Service Reform. Let me first of all extend a very warm welcome to Mr Mahalingum and Dr Rassappan. We are indeed privileged to have these two eminent Consultants with us again. As you all know, Mr Mahalingum has been instrumental in devising and driving our Civil Service Reform Programme since December 2000. It is therefore opportune that their services have again been secured for the elaboration of our third Civil Service Reform Action Plan. This will ensure consistency and cohesiveness in our approach to civil service reforms.

Colleagues, questions have been raised time and again on the need for planning, especially in the rapidly changing and volatile

environment of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. My own view is that any plan, no matter how imperfect, is better than no plan at all. A plan will enable us to set our course and at the end of the day, make an assessment of our successes ..... and failures. We can see what has worked and what has not and why. We can thus build on our successes, learn from our failures and review our strategies. There is also a need to take into account the fact that different stages of development give rise to new realities and diverse needs. Policies and priorities also change with a change of government. So the Civil Service must constantly re-engineer itself so as to respond positively to such situations.

Colleagues,

In the context of the last Budget exercise, a new wave of measures were announced in order to attain the budget objectives. These are profound and wide ranging measures aiming at facilitating business and opening up the economy, upgrading of public infrastructure, reviewing several sectors such as sugar,

manufacturing, tourism, financial services and specially restoring order in public finances.

The Government is once again looking up to the Public Service to realise these objectives. I know that during this financial year, you will have to manage within a tight budget. But this is the challenge. We shall have to do more with less. We have so far done a good job. The economic fundamentals are already showing some signs of recovery. But we still have a lot more to do.

Colleagues,

Granted we need to increase the pace and scope of the public service reform programme. We have to improve on how we recognize and reward the many examples of excellence in the public sector. There is much we can also learn from the private sector. But we must also realize that the civil service is different from the private sector. The public sector, unlike the private sector company cannot pick and choose its clients. It has to handle some of the most difficult and most intractable issues.

On the other hand, although the need for reform is unquestionable, I believe that there is also a need to protect, preserve and uphold the fundamental values that underpin our civil service: the values of honesty, objectivity, integrity and impartiality. The challenge today is therefore, how to reform the public service and make it into an organization which is continually evolving and reinventing itself while maintaining its values, sense of self-worth and identity. But I am confident with the ongoing and upcoming reforms, we shall be able to create a public service that is fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Colleagues,

I now come to the two important reform measures that are currently underway and which have been mentioned briefly by Mr Jhugroo. They are, firstly, the Programme Based Budgeting and secondly, the Performance Management System(PMS). As you already know, the Programme Based Budgeting is now moving ahead in a coherent manner with a government-wide application. The line item format of the Budget has been maintained for the

current financial year but next year will see a definite shift to the Programme Based Budgeting. **This process in itself has been a great learning experience and in my opinion, should be viewed as a continuous process of challenge and refinement.** I am sure the Financial Secretary would welcome any suggestions from you on how to enhance and strengthen the Programme Based Budgeting presentation next year.

Colleagues

With regard to Civil Service Reform, you will recall that under the first Action Plan, the thrust was on concepts and measures like: Citizen's Charters, Total Quality Management, Work Improvement Teams, ISO principles and Gemba Kaizen etc. However, a few months back, I came across a World Bank Report wherein it was argued that, although these initiatives all had merit, they did not add up to the comprehensive reforms that were necessary.

Consequently, after several years of work, the Performance Management System was introduced last year. **This is the one**

**measure that will take us closer to the heart of Reforms. If successfully implemented, it will certainly make a difference in a key result area.** The PMS as you know is being implemented on a **voluntary** basis. After a difficult start, reasonable progress has been made but major challenges still remain. Success will depend critically on top management commitment. **I therefore reiterate my appeal to all of you today to give your total support to this initiative.**

Colleagues,

But yet, if we want to improve performance in the Civil Service, **we have to change the incentive framework.** But it is not an easy task to change the incentive framework in central government bodies. I shall leave it to the wisdom of our good friend Mr Appanna, the Director of the Pay Research Bureau. There is therefore a strong logic for introducing Performance Management as the basis for running the Central Civil Service. PMS is at the heart of New Public Management and is fully consistent with other ongoing reforms initiatives. It also complements what is happening in Budget Reforms

which I mentioned earlier, i.e the linking of resource allocation to measurable objectives.

Colleagues,

I will say it again, even at the risk of repeating myself, **that the need to measure performance goes beyond the issues of cost and quality: it goes to the basic need for maintaining, and even restoring public confidence in Government.**

I am therefore contemplating to ask the High Level Steering Committee on Public Sector Reform **to examine, at its next meeting, the need for a progressive rolling out of the PMS to cover all Ministries/Departments.** Of course, we shall have to arrange for staff to be properly trained. I therefore press upon you to collaborate in the mainstreaming of the PMS by taking a lead role in driving the scheme in your respective organizations.

Colleagues,

This takes me to the last part of my address today, which is precisely on the changing role and competencies required of Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Department in the changing world of public service. I recently came across a press article in a weekly, in which a former Minister spoke, among other things, about what he perceived as an impoverishment of the quality of public service leadership following the retirement of the first generation of Permanent Secretaries and Heads of Department. I do not intend here to answer to those remarks. But I must underline the fact that today's public service leaders are evolving in a totally different environment- an environment characterized by globalization and economic liberalization, the ICT revolution, the liberalization of the airways leading to the advent of private airlines and the increased pressure on Governments causing the party in power to be in a state of permanent campaign in between two general elections. These are but a few examples of the forces that have transformed the public administration landscape and the political/administrative interface. In this new environment, the job of the Permanent Secretary has

undergone a re- profiling. Some of the traditional competencies required of a Permanent Secretary, like leadership, managing strategically and communication skills assume greater importance today. In addition, the Permanent Secretary needs to acquire some new knowledge and skills like, understanding the global economy and the impact of international dynamics on the sectors in his area of responsibility. These competencies are necessary not only to enable the Permanent Secretary or the Head of Department to weave through the intricate situations of the public domain, but also to rally the support of all stakeholders in realizing our national objectives. The training and development of our senior public service leaders must therefore remain high on our agenda. Lately we have been sending a good number of our senior officers for high level training abroad. I am going to maintain the practice in order to expand their horizons and deepen their abilities. Moreover, we are currently finalizing a new sponsorship scheme which will provide facilities and incentives to many more senior officers to embark on post-graduate courses in scarcity areas.

Colleagues,

Before ending, I would like to thank once again, our two distinguished foreign consultants for having accepted to extend their support in the elaboration of our next Action Plan. Given their impressive track record, I am sure that with their guidance we shall be able to steer in the right direction in our journey towards civil service reforms.

I wish you all a very fruitful deliberation and I thank you for your attention.

I now have the pleasure to declare the Workshop on the Civil Service Reform Action Plan 2008-2010 officially open.