

A survey conducted in the summer of 2009 by Hong Kong's Political and Economic Risk Consultancy (PERC) in 12 Asian countries showed that Indian bureaucracy is the worst in Asia. RJ publishes two opposing views voiced by Indian experts on this issue.

## BUREAUCRATS ARE THE MISSIONARIES OF MODERN INDIA



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Exclusively for RJ

**B**ureaucracy is necessary in every country, and necessary for every organisation. Bureaucracy performs administrative and management functions and the results of this work can be clearly seen.

In India, parliamentary elections are held regularly and while different parties come to power as a result, the nation as a whole continues to move forward. **And it is the bureaucracy that takes the nation forward. Parties come and go, but the work does not come to a halt;** the country does not stop, but continues to function thanks to its bureaucrats.

India has the Right to Information Act of 2005 that enables the public to know what is going on in the specific departments, ministries and governmental organisations.

Many people in India quite often believe bureaucrats to be corrupt. These are similar phenomena. But among bureaucrats there are many honest, hard-working people who are the backbone of the functioning governmental system. A system's effectiveness directly depends on how free the society is from corruption. **And the Indian bureaucracy is very effective.**

I would name our prime minister, Manmohan Singh, as an ideal for the Indian bureaucrat. He was a former bureaucrat, but now is not just a prime minister; he is a true political leader of the country, and a man of exceptional integrity. And there are many young ambitious bureaucrats in the country.

Of course, when talking about bureaucracy, this also refers to both law enforcement agencies and the Secret Service. India, just as Russia, faces the serious problem of terrorism, but **I would not make a direct connection between terrorist attacks and inefficiency of bureaucracy. Terrorism is something like a reaction to programs and policies of a government.** If an insane person wants to commit a terrorist act then no bureaucracy will stop him.

On the whole, I would describe the mission and the philosophy of Indian bureaucrats in this way: they are young and prepared to foster and embrace change, they implement policy honestly and work hard, trying to change the nation for the better. The modern independent India is a young nation, and Indian bureaucrats are the missionaries of modern India. ■

## INDIAN BUREAUCRACY NEEDS MODERNIZATION



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**T**oday, bureaucracy is becoming more and more unresponsive and unaccountable. **We need a bureaucracy that is responsive not only to political masters but more to the public,** because bureaucrats have the power to implement policies and programs. Bureaucrats have to ensure **that the implemented programs have maximum impact and results oriented particularly towards low income people in a society.**

When it comes to the question of a rational principle of governance (both in the governmental and corporate sector), it seems crucial to follow the three principles of openness, transparency, and accountability. This is the biggest challenge that most governments are facing in the developing world, and India is no exception.

If the present system of bureaucracy promotes corruption, then we need to introduce some sort of self-governance in various forms, e.g. computerization, E-governance, etc.; in other words, we need to create a bottom-up, community-based,

totally transparent, and accountable system of self administration.

It is argued that the present bureaucratic system places too great a cost on society. Others argue that it's an acceptable burden so long as the system can promote social order. However, this has too often led to increased tax burdens on a society, and people's lives have become miserable in developing countries as a result.

**In India, there is a growing awareness now that the system of bureaucracy needs to be revamped sooner or later.** The UPSC (a civil services examination body in India) has recently taken a decision to revamp its present system of examination. It plans to adopt the format of an aptitude test type exam for its services, in order to include more behavioral inputs in the system. I believe that this is a welcome change.

Another rapid change in the Indian bureaucratic system that we are now seeing is the emergence of some kind of transparency on the basis of the Right to Information (RTI) Act (2005). ■