

**“Stop doing what is easy or popular. Start doing what is right.” Roy T. Bennett**

## NATIONAL

### RAIL MADAD

#### **RPGRAMS – Rail Madad (Mobile Application for Desired Assistance During travel)**

RPGRAMS (Railway Passenger Grievance Redressal and Management System), which has been developed by Northern Railway (Delhi Division) came up with many novel features including ‘Rail Madad’.

It is a mobile App to register complaints by passengers through mobile phone/web.

It relays real time feedback to passengers on the status of redressal of their complaints- the passenger gets an instant ID through SMS on registration of complaint followed by a customized SMS communicating the action taken thereon by Railway.

RPGRAMS integrates all the passenger complaints received from multiple modes (14 offline/online modes currently) on a single platform, analyzes them holistically and generates various types of management reports.

This enables the top management to continuously monitor the pace of grievance redressal as well as evaluate the performance of field units/ trains/ stations on various parameters viz cleanliness, catering, amenities etc.

It also identifies weak/deficient areas and laggard trains/stations for undertaking focused corrective actions.

#### **Salient features of RAIL MADAD application are-**

Rail MADAD registers a complaint with minimum inputs from passenger (option of photo also available), issues unique ID instantly and relays the complaint online to relevant field officials for immediate action.

The action taken on complaint is also relayed to passenger through SMS, thus fast tracking the entire process of redressal of complaints through digitization.

Rail MADAD also displays various helpline numbers (e.g., Security, Child helpline etc) and provides direct calling facility for immediate assistance in one easy step

All modes of filing complaints including offline and online modes are being integrated on a single platform, therefore the resultant management reports present a holistic picture of weak/deficient areas and enable focused corrective action by officials concerned.

The data analysis would also generate trends on various performance parameters of a selected train/station like cleanliness, amenities etc thus making managerial decision more precise and effective.

## LATERAL ENTRY TO CIVIL SERVICES

In an apparent bid to bring in expertise from the private sector individuals and infuse talent into the country's bureaucracy, the government has invited “outstanding individuals” to join the government at the joint secretary level at the Centre.

In this regard, the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) has invited applications for 10 senior level positions in the Departments of Economic Affairs, Revenue, Commerce and Highways among others.

The eligibility criteria includes “Individuals working at comparable levels in Private Sector Companies, Consultancy Organisations, International/Multinational Organisations with a minimum of 15 years’ experience” besides those working in central public sector undertakings, autonomous bodies, statutory organisations, research bodies and universities.

The notification specifies a minimum age of 40 years and minimum qualification of graduation from a recognised university or institute while higher qualification will be an added advantage.

The recruitment will be on contract basis for three to five years.

So far, these posts were held by joint secretary level officers, who were career

bureaucrats, who join the service after passing UPSC exam. The post of joint secretary (JS) is crucial for policy making and implementation of government programmes and schemes, with most crucial decisions in ministries and departments taken by bureaucrats appointed JS.

Though the idea of lateral entry of private individuals into the administrative framework has been under discussion for some years now, this is the first move towards implementing the idea, which is generating curious debate on the pros and cons of the move.

#### **PROS:**

**Shortfall in numbers:** There is an overall 20% shortfall of IAS cadre officers alone in 24 state cadres. The Baswan Committee (2016) has shown how large states such as Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan have a deficit of 75 to over 100 officers and their unwillingness to sponsor officers to go to the Centre on deputation is understandable. Lateral induction is, therefore, a small step towards essential housekeeping in central government staffing and ought to be supported.

**Target oriented:** Outside talent from the private sector is more likely to be target-oriented, which will improve the performance of the government. Also, more competition will encourage career civil servants to develop expertise in areas of their choice.

**Improved governance:** The conventional wisdom on lateral entry is that it infuses fresh energy and thinking into an insular, complacent and often archaic bureaucracy. It enables the entry of right-minded professionals and the adoption of best practices for improving governance.

#### **CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS:**

**Disturbed balance:** The proposal for lateral entry at senior decision-making levels, besides increasing the disconnect between policymaking and implementation, will also result in inequitable sharing of the benefits and burdens of government service, with permanent civil servants left to bear the burden of “humble” implementation and

lateral entrants getting access to “glamorous” policymaking positions, without having roughed it out in remote and rural India in the rough and tumble of Indian democracy.

**Deters the available talent:** By suggesting a contract-based system for positions of joint secretary and above, the signal would be sent out that only mid-career positions would be within reach in about 15-18 years of service and there would be considerable uncertainty about career progression thereafter. Coupled with unattractive salary scales and non-entitlement to defined pension since 2004, this would become a potent trinity to deter talented persons from aspiring to civil service careers.

**Difficulty in assessing performance:** Also, it is not easy to assess the performance of a secretary to the government, given the sheer complexity and amorphous nature of the job. The induction of lateral entrants would not by itself suffice for better performance orientation and enhanced accountability. It would be as difficult to measure the performance of lateral entrants as it would of career civil servants.

#### **OPEN DATA, OPEN GOVERNMENT**

The new wave of a technological revolution will not be from pure data or access to consumer behaviour.

The application of data and their assimilation with solving social problems, enabling better governance and powering elected governments to serve their citizens better is ushering in a new revolution

#### **Ensuring privacy:**

“Datafication” of businesses has also brought to the fore the criticality of developing data management, storage and privacy laws.

The European Union with its General Data Protection Regulation has been a front-runner.

Other countries, including India, have also adopted a collaborative model to develop privacy laws, which includes deliberations

with creators of data (the consumer) and users (corporate).

### **Open government data movement**

Open government data is a silent but powerful movement unfolding globally.

Open government data means publishing information collected by the government in its entirety, such as government budgets, spending records, health-care measures, climate records, and farming and agricultural produce statistics.

Over 100 governments have already signed a charter to proactively share data collected by various government departments, for public consumption.

Fostering collaboration, enabling creative innovations and collective problem-solving are giving accountability and transparency a shot in the arm.

### **There are three basic reasons:**

One, such data collected by governments are for citizen welfare; hence they have an implicit right to benefit from the information.

Two, data sets such as government budget usage, welfare schemes and subsidies increase transparency and thereby build trust.

Third, and most important, it paves the way to develop technology-led innovations which can unlock massive economic value, thereby benefitting even the poorest of poor, the under-represented and the marginalized.

### **Potential Uses:**

Availability of data on yearly produce of crops, soil data health cards and meteorological data sets can help companies develop customised crop insurance solutions with specific risk-based pricing.

Data points around progress in literacy rates, demographic data and density of educators can help develop customized solutions for villages.

Information on the availability of facilities in public hospitals, current occupancy rates, hospital and demographic data can pave the way for curated health-care applications.

### **5C APPROACH:**

**Completeness:** The first step is to ensure completeness of data stacks opened for use either through machine-readable formats or direct application programme interfaces (APIs)

For example, soil data cards will have data on all relevant aspects as well as current emerging technologies such as Block chain and the Internet of Things to provide the opportunity to automate data collection

**Comprehensiveness:** This is essential for a data stack or various data sets. Currently, data sets shared in India are somewhat disjointed and not comprehensive

For example, a comprehensive agri-data set would have digitised data sets on soil data, rainfall, crop production as well as market rates

**Clustering:** This would mean combining data sets which can lead to the creation of applications such as farm insurance from weather, soil and crop cycle/sale data

The fourth step is building anchor cases or use-cases to encourage data usage. A case in point is Aadhaar/identity data which has seen exponential growth

Setting up a comprehensive governance framework which includes an open data council with cross-sector representation to monitor, regulate and build usage after proportionate oversight

### **Way forward:**

Research by PwC in Australia estimated that open data can add an additional 1.5% to the country's GDP.

In the Indian context, this could conservatively translate to about \$22 billion.

The time is now ripe for the government to create data-driven governance architecture by building digital trust in the economy and its intent.

### **SEVA BHOJ YOJANA**

The Union Ministry of Culture recently introduced a new scheme called 'SevaBhojYojna' to reimburse the central

share of CGST and IGST on items for food/prasad/langar/bhandara offered free of cost by charitable religious institutions.

### **Seva Bhoj Yojana:**

The scheme seeks to reimburse the central government's share of Central Goods and Services Tax (CGST) and Integrated Goods and Service Tax (IGST) on purchase of raw items such as ghee, edible oil, atta, maida, rava, flour, rice pulses, sugar and jaggery, which go into preparation of food/prasad/langar/bhandara offered free of cost by religious institutions.

The main objective of the scheme is to lessen the financial burden of such charitable religious institutions, which provide free of cost without any discrimination to the general public and devotees.

The charitable religious institutions including temples, gurudwara, mosque, church, dharmik ashram, dargah, monasteries, which fulfill the following criteria are eligible for the grant:

The institutions that have been in existence for at least five years before applying for financial assistance/grant.

The institutions that serve free food to at least 5000 people in a month.

The institutions covered under Section 10(23BBA) of the Income Tax Act or those registered as Society under Societies Registration Act ( XXI of 1860) or as a Public Trust under any law for the time being in force of statutory religious bodies constituted under any Act or institutions registered under Section 12AA of Income Tax Act.

### **SOCIAL**

#### **PRADHAN MANTRI MATRU VANDANA YOJANA (PMMVY)**

After initial hiccups in implementing the maternity benefit programme Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), the government has finally made some headway and provided cash incentives to nearly 23.6 lakh beneficiaries out of an estimated 51.6 lakh a year.

### **PMMVY:**

Pradhan Mantri Matritva Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), previously Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY), is a maternity benefit program run by the government of India.

PMMVY is implemented by the Ministry of Women & Child Development in collaboration with State Governments.

It is Centrally Sponsored Scheme under which the cost sharing ratio between the Centre and the States & UTs with Legislature is 60:40, for North-Eastern States & three Himalayan States; it is 90:10 and 100% Central assistance for Union Territories without Legislature.

It is a conditional cash transfer scheme for pregnant and lactating women of 19 years of age or above for first live births.

### **SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

#### **KATRIN EXPERIMENT**

Researchers in Germany with the Karlsruhe Tritium Neutrino experiment have started collecting data to determine the mass of the universe's lightest particle- neutrino. Those are sometimes called "ghost particles" because they're so difficult to detect.

Determining the mass of neutrinos is one of the most important open questions in particle physics and will help scientists better understand the history of the universe.

#### **KATRIN experiment:**

The KATRIN experiment is currently set up and commissioned on the Campus North of the Karlsruhe Institute for Technology.

The experiment is collaboration between national and international partners with currently more than 150 scientists, engineers, technicians and students.

KATRIN measures the neutrino mass in a model-independent way via ultrahigh precision measurements of the kinematics of electrons from beta-decay.

Neutrinos are the most abundant massive elementary particles in nature. Due to their minimalistic properties they are key particles



for understanding physics on the smallest scale (elementary particle physics) up to the largest scale – the universe (cosmology).

Neutrinos are the only elementary particles of matter, which do not carry electrical or strong charge and thus are blind to the electromagnetic and the strong interaction and cannot be bound.

In the context of particle physics they participate only in the weak interaction. This made neutrinos the most prominent candidate to explore with them the properties of the weak interaction.

#### NEW PLANET DISCOVERED BY PRL

A team from the Physical Research Laboratory, Ahmedabad, has spotted for the first time a distant planet six times bigger than Earth and revolving around a Sun-like star about 600 light years away.

EPIC 211945201b (or K2-236b) is the name given to the planet by the discovery team. The host star is named EPIC 211945201 or K2-236.

With this discovery India has joined a handful of countries which have discovered planets around stars,” PRL’s parent ISRO has announced.

The discovery was made using a PRL-designed spectrograph, PARAS, to measure and confirm the mass of the new planet.

#### EPIC:

EPIC was found circling very close to the Sun-like star, going around it once in about 19.5 days and unlikely to be inhabitable because of its high surface temperature of around 600°C. The team found the planet to be smaller in size than Saturn and bigger than Neptune.

Its mass is about 27 times Earth’s and six times that of Earth at radius.

The scientists estimate that over 60% of its mass could be made up of heavy elements like ice, silicates and iron.

The spectrograph is the first of its kind in the country which can measure the mass of a planet going around a star.

Very few such spectrographs exist around the world (mostly in the USA and in the Europe) that can do such precise measurements.

They measured the mass of the planet using the indigenously designed PARAS (PRL Advance Radial-velocity Abu-sky Search).

This spectrograph is integrated with the 1.2-metre telescope located at PRL’s Gurushikhar Observatory in Mount Abu, Rajasthan.

#### IMAP MISSION

It a science mission of NASA planned for launch in 2024 that will sample, analyze, and map particles streaming to Earth from the edges of interstellar space.

#### IMAP mission:

The Interstellar Mapping and Acceleration Probe (IMAP) mission will help researchers better understand the boundary of the heliosphere, a sort of magnetic bubble surrounding and protecting our solar system. This is the fifth mission in NASA’s Solar Terrestrial Probes (STP) Program portfolio.

Another objective of the mission is to learn more about the generation of cosmic rays in the heliosphere. Cosmic rays created locally and from the galaxy and beyond affect human explorers in space and can harm technological systems, and likely play a role in the presence of life itself in the universe.

The spacecraft will be positioned about one million miles (1.5 million kilometers) away from Earth towards the Sun at what is called the first Lagrange point or L1. This will allow the probe to maximize use of its instruments to monitor the interactions between solar wind and the interstellar medium in the outer solar system.

#### Heliosphere:

This region is where the constant flow of particles from our Sun, called the solar wind, collides with material from the rest of the galaxy. This collision limits the amount of harmful cosmic radiation entering the heliosphere.

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