

Is the IAS fortress showing cracks?

Is the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) feeling the heat? Has the decision of Adapa Karthik - this year's civil services exam topper for appointment to the IAS - to continue serving in the IPS shaken the citadel of power?

The en masse uprising of all non-IAS services following the sixth Central Pay Commission (CPC) recommendations is common knowledge. This resulted in exposing the not-so-deft sleight of IAS dirty hands for safeguarding their own turf through chicanery and machinations - indulged in through the decades to perpetuate, consolidate and still better their superior edge over all other services and continue to lord over while gloatingly twiddling thumbs from their lofty chairs.

Now with their back to the wall, the IAS officers have at last woken up to the need to go on the offensive - to salvage their diminishing stock? The chosen target for the initial attack, it appears, is a brilliant young buck from the IPS, whose lucid pen has been attracting attention for putting heat under IAS seats.

The route for the strike was the union ministry's department of personnel and training (DOPT), which has sent Abhinav Kumar, a superintendent of police from the Jharkhand cadre, a show cause notice for his articles in the media, analysing the game behind the recommendations of the CPC. The IPS lad is being targeted for exposing the embarrassingly unsavoury chinks in the IAS armour and for presenting to readers realistic facts and figures that hurt IAS interests; secrets which now stand exposed, no longer safely hidden within well guarded IAS controlled vaults inside labyrinthine mazes under their ministries!

Among other things, Abhinav educated the nation about how in 1981, out of 60 secretary-level positions at the centre as many as 25 were occupied by non-IAS; the number has remained the same for non-IAS even 27 years after, when secretary-level positions have now risen from 60 to 250 - the nigh 200 additions all having been created for and occupied by the IAS. So much for the government's adumbrated policy of downsizing its bureaucratic belly! Abhinav also made bold to postulate his theory that the root cause of unrest, violence, and growing Naxalism in the country was the inefficient management of land revenue and land records - both closely protected turfs of the IAS.

The media has been ablaze with articles from others too - condemning the only justification peddled by the CPC for granting the IAS an 'edge' based on the philosophy of tradition, something completely misplaced in today's world. Discrimination favouring the pay suggested for secretary-level officers (Rs.80,000) - at which almost 100 percent IAS officers retire notwithstanding the much-touted pyramidal structure declared for public consumption, vis-a-vis additional secretary (Rs.67,000) - the best level reached if at all by a mere sprinkling few in other services - has been termed most outrageous. Every IAS officer retires with the maximum pension, while it is hard to find even one percent of the total cadre strength in the IPS retiring as secretary or equivalent.

The sixth CPC recommendations have been exposed unequivocally as 'a well-contrived move by the IAS to hold on to its tottering suzerainty on the specious ground of historical logic - now rightfully challenged by all sections of Indian society and other services'.

Against this background, an exception seems to have been made to single out Abhinav - in whose

case the centre has directly intervened, probably out of desperation; for normally such a course of action is initiated by the state as the cadre-controlling authority. It is rare for the DOPT to be involved, and would invariably need prior approval of the minister concerned.

The outcome of this show cause notice, only time will tell. But what's clear is that this mindless vindictive act on their part has united the IPS community across the country like never before - something the IAS perhaps did not anticipate or expect. The move is being viewed as a fresh attack on the much aggrieved IPS as a whole. The feeling within the country's IPS fraternity - be it among serving or past ones, is to take the IAS head on and not let them think Abhinav is alone. The IPS will 'no longer suffer in silence' nor permit individual officers to 'face the IAS music on their own' - is the war cry.

Does this open war between services augur well for the nation and its governance? Are the warning signs deliberately being ignored? Or is Prime Minister Manmohan Singh too fickle to stand firm by his promise for giving this nation a top class police force capable of tackling its ills of terrorism and Naxalism?

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