

KIRAN BEDI

FEARLESS GOVERNANCE



F E A R L E S S G O V E R N A N C E

P R O S P E R O U S P U D U C H E R R Y



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FEARLESS GOVERNANCE

© Author : Dr Kiran Bedi
Website : www.kiranbedi.com
Email : kiran@kiranbedi.com
Publisher : Diamond Pocket Books (P) Ltd.
& Kindle X-30, Okhla Industrial Area, Phase-II
Version New Delhi-110020
E-mail : sales@dpb.in
Website : www.dpb.in
Edition : 2022

Technology Support : India Vision Foundation

Cover Photo Credit : Joy Srivastava

Cover Design & Book Layout : Intime Reprographics

QR Code Support : Instinct School and Studio of Design

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DEDICATION



The Mother



Shri Aurobindo



Father- Parkash Peshawaria



Mother- Prem Peshawaria



People of Puducherry



THE APPOINTMENT LETTER



By virtue of the power vested in me by clause (1) of article 239 of the Constitution of India, I, Pranab Mukherjee, President of India, hereby appoint **Ms. Kiran Bedi**, to be the Lieutenant-Governor of Puducherry with effect from the date she assumes charge of her office.

Given at Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi, this twenty-second day of May in the year two thousand sixteen (1st Jyaistha, 1938 Saka), in the sixty-seventh year of the Republic of India.



Pranab Mukherjee
President of India

AUTHOR SPEAK



I recall a decision I took as a 12-year-old girl. I wanted science in 9th standard, not the subject ‘household’, as was urged by my teacher.

I decided to leave my city’s most acclaimed and eminent school- Sacred Heart in Amritsar, where I had been since kindergarten.

I passed the Board exam the same year, earning a double promotion and entered a prestigious college, getting ahead of my classmates from my previous school - because I dared.

I knew what was not for me. I never allowed anything imposed on me. My upbringing was towards self-reliance and self-dependence with a spirit of giving and sharing. I had learnt to create solutions out of little or nothing. For instance, I was shadow practising when I did not have a tennis court.

My father taught me the art of self-learning. My mother imbibed in me personal discipline with selflessness in action. I always asked myself how I could do more for others.

FEARLESS GOVERNANCE

I did my post-graduation, earning academic and sports scholarships, the first time any student got two together on merit.

I travelled with books while on the tennis circuit to do well in exams, knowing that would be my future. I optimally used every hour of my day, valuing every resource of my Government College and Punjab University, Chandigarh, for learning and personal growth. I knew where I was to go. What was I to do? How will I achieve it?

I became the first woman in India to join the officer ranks of the Indian Police Service as an inner calling to serve - because this is who I was.

It did not matter to me that the service was all men led. I knew I could steer it. From day one, I felt at home in my police uniform.

I led the all-male contingent (taller than me) at the Republic Day Parade in Delhi on January 26, 1975, marching 14 kilometres with a sword in my hand. Despite my seniority, I was being overlooked by my Police Chief, thinking it would be tough for me. I got to command the contingent only after he heard me. It sent a clear message that I was an equal match, if not more.

I never accepted inequality, injustice and servitude. I created resources and found solutions.

I was people-centric in all my positions, even when a few envious seniors and some peers were scorning it. My true friends were my immediate family, close friends, extended family of co-workers and a few seniors.

I valued every day of my service.

The citation of the Ramon Magsaysay Award received in 1994 in Government Service, also considered the Nobel Peace Prize of Asia, encompasses my creativity in policing, prison reforms and social engineering.

In my responsibility as Lt. Governor of Puducherry, I overhauled and reinvigorated moribund systems. Puducherry needed an authentic and fearless command. There were many powerful and vested interests.

I earned this position of trust when Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi categorically told me while offering me to be the Lt. Governor of Puducherry - ***“Go and take care of the money in Puducherry, Kiran Ji.”***

I served the People of Puducherry for nearly five years, making each day count.

I got introduced to the Union Territory not by its natural beauty but more by its clogged and dry irrigation canals not dredged for decades. Or the rotting filth, lost ponds, deserted lakes, and dry tanks abandoned to decay.

I left Puducherry with its crown-jewel beach nearly restored. It has brought back marine life, cheer and abundance in the economy, tourism, and quality of life for the people of Puducherry and its continual visitors.

This book illustrates how a sense of belonging rejuvenates problem-solving in any service.

I dealt with the political establishment seeking acquiescence and expected me to be their ‘rubber stamp’; instead, they witnessed the fundamentals of good governance.

The office of Lieutenant Governor became a Fearless Voice.



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The Call, The Calling And The Strategy

CHAPTER 1

THE CALL AND THE CALLING



“Take care of the money in Puducherry, Kiran Ji,” said the Honorable Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, on my acceptance of responsibility as the Lieutenant Governor of Puducherry.

During one of my travels within India, I went to Puducherry to see the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. While bowing my head in reverence at the Samadhi of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, I heard an inner voice - ‘Go, visit Raj Nivas.’

I asked Chandra Gariyali, IAS (Retd.), my friend and batchmate, accompanying me, “Where is Raj Nivas?”

She said, “Just next lane.”

I told her, “Let’s go.”

The security guards at the Raj Nivas gate allowed us in.

We passed by the overawing tall palm trees, the lush green lawns, and the statue of Varaha, one of the avatars of Vishnu. This deity was the centre of attraction in front of the building.



The Lt. Governor was not in the office. We met with Shri G. Srinivas, Additional Secretary and other officials, had tea together, and left. As I walked out, I thought I may have left behind a piece of myself.

After a few years, the Honourable Prime Minister of India invited me to serve Puducherry as its Lt. Governor.

Was it to fulfil a divine calling? I wondered.

I accepted the responsibility with reverence, sensing a divine design. I resolved to make it EVERYTHING.

I became the 24th Lieutenant Governor of Puducherry.



CHAPTER 2

LEARNING FROM DAY ONE



The news of being called by the Honourable Prime Minister went viral. The media were tracking me.

On being asked, I confirmed, “Yes, I am going to Puducherry - looking forward to my new responsibility.”

It took me less than a week to leave for Puducherry.

During the intervening days, I worked with the Puducherry Resident Commissioner, Mr. K.K. Singh, a senior civil servant who had hands-on knowledge of the administration in Puducherry. I was eager to know about the Union Territory’s challenges and possible strategies the administration could adopt.

The more I learned about Puducherry, the more it became evident that service and financial matters would need a sound grasp, planning, and correction.

The clear concerns were dealing with the pernicious practice of borrowing to repay, blatant violation of financial rules, rampant corruption, and prevailing rowdyism.

I telephoned the Chief Secretary of Puducherry, asking him to set up a toll-free phone line to receive information against organised crime, property grabbing and corruption. I wanted this to be functioning by the time I landed as I wanted people to have a confidential toll-free number to communicate.

I persisted with the Chief Secretary to have it installed. I sensed his discomfort at my insistence on its urgent implementation. He had to comply.

I called up my predecessor, General A.K. Singh, to share any thoughts on Puducherry for guidance. He was Administrator - Andamans, with an additional charge as the Lieutenant Governor, Puducherry.

He assured me that he had left behind an excellent team of officers at Raj Nivas. The officers were professionally capable and trustworthy, led by Secretary Mr. G. Theva Neethi Dhas, a senior IAS officer. Others were Shri G. Srinivas, Additional Secretary to LG of Puducherry; Shri Praveen Kumar Tripathi, ADC to Lt. Governor; Mr. R. Sridharan, Private Secretary to Lt. Governor; Mr. J. Kumaran, Public Relations Assistant; and Mrs. Asha Gupta, Comptroller of Household.

With this account and self-induction, I left for the Union Territory of Puducherry. I flew by Indigo Airlines - an economy flight.

Dr. Amrita Bahl, a long-standing friend and prospective Officer on Special Duty, accompanied me.

While on the flight, Amrita and I coined the strategic mission statement 'Prosperous Puducherry', wanting all services, actions, and decisions aligned towards one common purpose - 'Prosperous Puducherry.'

I resolved to make this responsibility my life.



CHAPTER 3

THE STRATEGIC SWOT



It took more than three hours to reach Puducherry by road from the Chennai airport. The Chief Secretary chose to come to the airport.

During the drive, he volunteered to brief. I felt, he was understating many essential issues I was already aware of from the earlier orientation. But for me, his was additional information. I thanked him for all that he shared.

I reached Raj Nivas by early evening to a warm reception. Almost all of the Raj Nivas staff was present.

I greeted and shook hands with everyone. The officers honoured me with the most colourful stoles and bouquets. I saved the stoles for the service workers - flowers I sent to senior citizens' homes.

I was escorted to my formal office and then to my first-floor residence.

Adjacent to my residential suites was a historic dining room and a monumental Durbar Hall. This sizeable hall had precious artefacts meticulously preserved.

Raj Nivas is a magnificent French building of 1765 and a former palace with a long history of its own. My office was on the ground floor; I climbed the elegantly winding staircase dressed in a red carpet. There was an elevator which I never used.

On entering my king-sized bedroom, the first thing I did was push back the long, high, velvet curtains to see the sky, and the stately tall palm trees visible from the clear and clean french windows.

I gazed at the limitless sky, thinking of Papa.

I remembered him telling me, “Kiran, for you, the sky is the limit.”

I programmed my Oath Ceremony for the evening of May 29, 2016, even though it was a Sunday. This day was solemn for me as it was my Mother’s Day. She lived her entire life considering work as worship.

I recollected my Mummy saying, “Kiran, one day you will.....but I don’t know whether I will be there to see it”.

I informed my Secretary about my intention to greet and meet all key officers the forenoon before the oath ceremony to interact and share my thoughts. Secretaries, the Director-General of Police, and other seniors were present in the conference hall.

I found them well turned out, with anticipation on their faces, wondering what was coming from their new Lt. Governor, a woman, senior-most in age but shortest in height.

I greeted them with affection and assurance that I was here to serve the people of Puducherry and work closely with them as one large family.

I shall ensure total fairness and justice in all processes. I will always be just a message away from them.



On Arrival at Raj Nivas

I then explained the objective of the SWOT form I had brought for them to express their views on the administration's Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats, and Opportunities. Before making my views public at the oath ceremony, I needed to sense the pulse and the prevailing challenges.

My opening statement would set the stage for mutual expectations between the administration and the people. I requested them to express their views as these shall remain with me only. The officers then got down to record their reflections.

Once they finished filling the columns, Amrita Bahl, my OSD, collected the forms. I thanked them for respecting my request and invited them to be part of the oath-taking ceremony the same evening.

I apprised them of announcing the Mission Statement - 'Prosperous Puducherry' at the oath ceremony as the 'North Star' for all we will do while administering the Union Territory.

Their written responses remain in my safekeeping. The Strengths were its educated and youthful workforce; Opportunities were scope to upskill and Weaknesses and Threats were political vagaries.

Every single feedback form was an ‘education’ of the predominant complexities. It enabled me to get into the thinking of senior leadership early on as to how they felt about themselves and their work. It became evident they were functioning in Silos.

WEAKNESSES	THREATS
<div><div>1. political myopia short sightedness</div><div>2. scarce resources</div><div>3. undue centralisation of powers in MHA.</div></div>	<div><div>1. Over politicisation</div><div>2. Small minded political persons.</div><div>3. dole dependent culture/ freebies</div></div>

An Excerpt of a SWOT Feedback

With time this analysis proved to be on the mark and became the bedrock of substantial administrative reconditioning.



CHAPTER 4

THE 'TEA' MANTRA



Raj Nivas did not have a conference hall. Its parking space was the makeshift auditorium. All newly elected members of the recently held assembly elections were invited to the oath ceremony. They had not formed the Government yet.

The officers I met earlier in the day, were present besides the special invitees the Secretariat had invited. A few of my family members and close friends came. Media was present in significant numbers.

I was informed that there was no speech ritual at the oath ceremony. Nevertheless, I told my Secretary that the inaugural ceremony would be an appropriate occasion to give people and the administration a strategic shared vision of responsive governance. It will provide us with collective vigour in fulfilling our mission 'Prosperous Puducherry'.

I went ahead and gave the administration my 'TEA' Mantra.

My Acceptance Speech on May 29, 2016

I wish to thank the Honourable President of India for reposing faith in me. I thank the Honourable Justice Huvadi G Ramesh, Madras High Court, for swearing me in as Lieutenant Governor.

I thank all the elected representatives, public officials, members of civil society, the media, my family, and friends present today.

First, let me share my reason for this ceremony being held today on Sunday.

It is my Mother's Day. On this day in 1999, she is with me in spirit. Every year, we celebrate her for what she embodied. She always said that Work is Worship, and for me, today, this new responsibility is a form of worship - to serve the most beautiful part of India. I will give it all I have, the energy and experience.

We all visualise a 'Prosperous Puducherry,' and we shall deliver this responsibility through three principle mantras, the first being 'Trust.' This would mean working with integrity in all forms - financial, administrative, and intention.

The second mantra is 'Empowerment.' This means optimum utilisation of resources while addressing concerns.

The third mantra is 'Accountability' - Not just to the people but also to yourself. It means implementing and promoting respect for the law.

Together these mantras form the acronym TEA.

Friends, you will see more of us in the field, fully accessible, implementing, connecting, and serving to make our country proud. Making 'Puducherry Prosperous' will be our higher purpose.

Jai Hind.

After the oath, I was again adorned in multi-coloured stoles as part of the culture. It was overwhelming.

Puducherry got a full-time Lieutenant Governor after a lapse of two years.

The oath-taking ceremony took a dramatic turn when one of the elected representatives, Ms. Vijayavani, bent to touch my feet after presenting the stole. I instantly returned her gesture by bowing to touch her feet as an act of mutual reverence. This action left the visitors astounded.

The media reported this in bold headlines the next day. This incident went viral on social media and local channels.

The following day newspapers carried the 'TEA' mantra and the mission statement of 'Prosperous Puducherry.' I achieved the objective of giving the administration and the people of Puducherry a disposition with a higher purpose from day one of assuming responsibility.

A mission statement was necessary to unite and bring an emotional bonding for a higher purpose.

For me, this was the prelude to an odyssey ahead.



A Video & News Clips of this event are in ***QR Code**



CHAPTER 5

INVISIBLE COUNSELORS



Morning Meditation at the Raj Nivas

Administration in Puducherry demanded extraordinary pursuit to stay ahead of challenges.

It needed ideas and direction. It required able leadership and vigorous administration, with time to reflect. I decided to get into a daily regime to generate energy through Yoga, meditation and nature walk.

I remembered my Vipassana teacher, Shri SN Goenka, telling me that the best energy-gaining time is 4:30 am. I fixed the alarm for 4:00 am and followed a regime that worked wonders. It stimulated me, generated ideas to work on, and provided mental wellbeing. I felt

navigated by a higher power. It was a daily grace. While concentrating on my breath, creative thoughts flowed on their own. I received several options effortlessly. They just came in as if someone was conversing with me. The inner voice guided me to the next step.



A daily workout followed meditation. I took full advantage of the Raj Nivas lawns, the drive-in and the pathways for morning walks, the gallery for my physical activities and newspaper reading.

I had fitness machines placed in the long broad gallery. I had the treadmill, cross trainer, stepper, stationary bikes, weights, roller, and other equipment.

This arrangement was a replication of my home gym in Delhi. I used the exercise equipment as per the feel of the day. I used the mornings to listen to the national and international news on the radio and read the editorials in the newspapers. It prepared me for the day ahead.

I watched the daybreak, the birds flying past, the sunrise, the sunbeams piercing through the branches of the trees, the hoisting of the flag atop the Raj Nivas building accompanied by the bugle call. All this

captivated me. I photographed and shared short videos with my friends and colleagues using WhatsApp groups and social media handles.

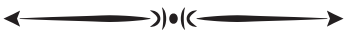


I started my day punctually with creative energy, updated information, and a fitness regime to later engage with my core team at 10:00 am sharp.

The positive energy generated gave me the zest for the day and prepared me for X factors.



Raj Nivas Pathway



Scan QR for Videos & Photos

CHAPTER 6

DAILY MORNING NUTRITION



I felt the compelling need to connect the Raj Nivas with public officials through a daily, inspiring morning greeting. I wanted them to feel related as one large family at work, in service of the people of Puducherry. Puducherry was home to me. I left Delhi behind.

To knit them together, I created a seamless WhatsApp group called ‘Prosperous Puducherry,’ with all Secretaries to the Government to stay connected across departments. Soon, I added the Directors and the Heads of Departments. This technology tool brought us together with no prior working relationships with rank and file. It became a broad network prioritising relationships to enhance the workplace experience. It further strengthened in the coming weeks as we interconnected with new groups using the web to think and work together.

I posted my daily greetings as ‘Morning Nutrition’ at 6:00 am to the group. I prepared the message the night before but posted it at daybreak to save my morning time.

Many woke up with that ‘good morning’ inspirational notification, and with time a voice-over. I have been tweeting motivational content on the Twitter handle as a continuing practice for years before coming to Puducherry.

The ‘Morning Nutrition’ greeting got forwarded to individual groups of respective departments, thus spreading readiness. Even if I did not meet in person, I did through inspiration. This form of messaging steadily facilitated the LG office to relate with public officials at the cutting edge. Whether it was increasing a feeling of camaraderie was too early to say. But without this, the LG office could not have communicated with rank and file at the needed pace and consistency to transform the existing work culture.

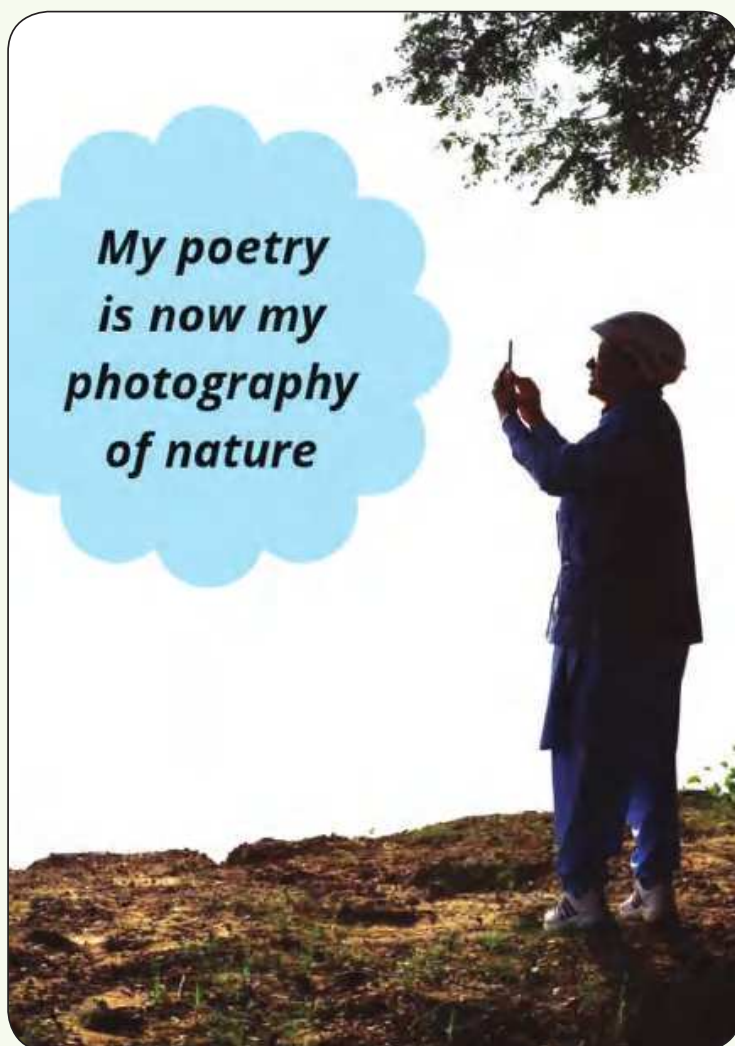
The ‘Morning Nutrition’ greeting steam-rolled the system for incremental use of the WhatsApp social media tool, keeping in mind the Mission Statement ‘Prosperous Puducherry’.



Scan QR for Morning Nutrition with my voice over

CHAPTER 7

POETRY THROUGH LENS



Nature was bountiful in the Raj Nivas. It had an abundance of flora and fauna, birds, flowers, the fountain, the sunshine, the moonlight, the open sky, and just ONE cat, towering palm trees, more than a dozen mango trees inviting the koel cooing.

Woodpeckers, parrots, crows, squirrels, mynas, sparrows, and other birds, were all over, with an occasional bat and an owl. And once in a while, a peacock flew in to save himself when chased by a monkey.

I was amidst nature during my morning workout. I cherished gazing at the lush green lawns and tall palm trees with birds crisscrossing the skies from the gallery.

I watched birds jostle with each other to perch on the sharp and thin tips of the palm trees, with many latching and swinging on the lean ends of the palm leaves.

The crows came to take a bite of my morning NICE biscuit, which came with my morning tea. They waited for their share and cawed at their friends to join. The attendant at Raj Nivas came with extras for me to feed.

The centre of the lawns had a fountain. When played, the shower of the spray broke into a riot of colours. My favourite jay bird looking a bit like the Kingfisher with turquoise feathers, visited the fountain pond once in a while.

When it rained, it made the lawns lush in all hues of green. While the palm leaves swayed, the tree trunks stood erect. Nothing rattled them, not even the ‘Nivar’ cyclone that hit Puducherry during my time.

Sharing nature photographs added a new dimension to our interactions at the start of the day. My photos even went into an exhibition held later.

Raj Nivas made me a nature photographer while mother earth nourished me holistically.



Photographs From the Photo Exhibition at Raj Nivas



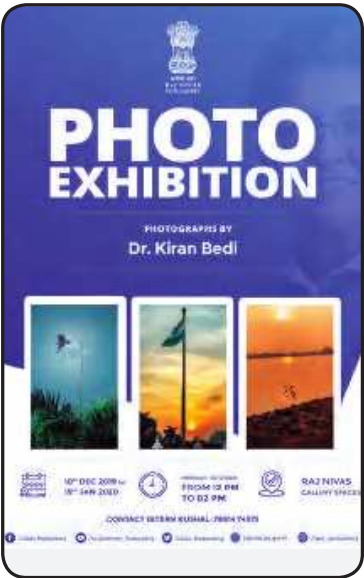
Sunbeams in my bedroom at Raj Nivas





Parrots & the Palm Trees

The Flora and The Fauna



Scan QR for More Photos & Videos



Alleviating, Renovating And Sanitizing

CHAPTER 8

FIRST MEETING WITH LAW SECRETARY



Puducherry, known as the French Riviera of India, was liberated on August 16, 1962, fifteen years after India gained independence and officially merged with the Indian Union.

The Indian and French Parliaments formally accepted the ‘Treaty of Cession’, marked as De Jure Day in Puducherry.

Puducherry was declared a Union Territory by the 14th Amendment of the Constitution Act, 1962. The UT has a Lieutenant Governor and not a full-fledged Governor like other States in India.

I decided to hold my first meeting with the Law Secretary in my office. I wanted to know and get clarity on my legal powers and responsibilities. Mr. Theva Neethi Dhas, my Secretary, accordingly arranged the meeting on priority with Mr. G. Sendil Kumar, Law Secretary. Mr. Dhas informed him of the purpose; hence he came prepared.

My query was straightforward. I wanted to know my legal position as a Lt. Governor vis-a-vis the Elected Government, as laid down in the Indian Constitution, the Act of Parliament, the Union Territory Act, the Business Rules, and General Financial Rules authorised and approved by the President of India.

The Law Secretary explained all the relevant provisions. My Private Secretary, Mr. R. Sridharan, gave me a quick read and ready reference note.

The briefings and the reading revealed that the buck stopped at my desk on financial, service, and specific policy matters. My position was to function as the representative of the President of India.



The Note on Legal Position

On Service matters: which means appointments, promotions, recruitments, transfers, creation of posts, disciplinary issues, the constitution of boards and committees, relaxation of any rules, or continuance of temporary positions. However, under Sub Rule 2 of Rule 47 of Rules of Business of Government of Puducherry, regarding service matters, the Administrator (also read the Lieutenant Governor) shall act in consultation (not aid and advice) with Chief Minister. And in respect of no specific provisions, the Administrator may, if deems fit, either consult his Council or the Chief Minister before exercising his powers or discharging his functions.

On Administrative Powers: Under Rule 25 of the Rules of Business, it is essential to take the Administrator's prior approval before issuing orders. Topics relating to policy, claims that affect or are likely to affect the peace and tranquillity of the Union Territory, financial matters involving new taxation, the point on plan evaluation, and more.

On Financial Powers: The Administrator is the custodian of the Consolidated Fund of the Union Territory of Puducherry. With the approval of the President of India, the Administrator makes payments and withdrawals of money. The Standing Finance Committee has delegated to Administrator to incur expenditure up to Rs. 50 crores. The Administrator has been empowered with full capabilities to sanction grants and loans to autonomous bodies and undertakings on grants-in-aid. Similarly, the clear powers to raise market borrowings and negotiated loans are subject to the Home Ministry's clearance.

These responsibilities in service matters or financials encompassed across the administration.

I am not sure how many knew about the broad legal responsibilities given to this administrator position. As weeks went by, I realised very few knew, including the media.

I perceived the enormity of the responsibility of my position. I, fortunately, inherited a very experienced team with institutional

memory. We now got down to work in the right earnest knowing the others were in a dilemma.

I did not anticipate an almighty political challenge that lay ahead at that early time. Very soon in the early weeks of my assuming charge, an awaiting newsman asked me about the possibility of friction between elected Government and the office of the Lieutenant Governor.

I replied, “Why should there be any ? Financial integrity should always be a priority. Every penny of the Government will be accountable. Following the law ought not to cause friction.”

I think perhaps the media reporter knew what was likely to come. I did not; I was new to the situation.

I focused mainly on the letter and spirit of the law, examining files based on the laws, rules, and procedures as explained to me by the Law Secretary. The political establishment had their set ideas, claiming to be legal pundits.

I did not know then that it shall cost me my entire tenure of nearly five years to fix this. It came at a hefty charge on public funds, public time, and untiring efforts. It equally engaged the Government of India. Closer to my departure, existing rules and laws got judicially reiterated by the Honourable Supreme Court and Madras High Court.

I left behind a legacy of legal clarity on nettlesome issues.



Scan QR for Document on Financial Power

CHAPTER 9

I BANNED THE VIP SIREN



Driver Kumaran

My first drive on the roads of Puducherry as its Lt. Governor was annoying. My pilot car blared a screaming siren to push away people and commuters for my car to drive past. I was watching people's reactions while sitting in my car. Some commuters appeared surprised, and some stood in awe. Few greeted, and few wondered who the intruder was.

Looking out of my car window, I was regretful and apologetic for the inconvenience caused. I imagined myself treated like this as a pedestrian or a commoner driving on the road.

I had seen this happen when posted as Special Secretary to the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi in 1998. But then, I was not the cause.

Now I was, I decided not to be.

I told my ADC to order the pilot to stop blowing the siren and follow the traffic signals. It caused a flutter. The staff was worried that I would get stuck in traffic jams. The city police felt challenged.

The police department wondered how to ensure a hassle-free traffic movement with the limited staff.

People were used to traffic jams and unregulated intersections with non-functioning traffic signals. They had reconciled to being pushed aside by several VIP movements.

I requested the Director-General Police to strengthen traffic regulation systems for the benefit of the public. All VIPs in haste will have to learn to go through normal traffic regulation. Seniors in traffic management realised the need to improve the overall situation. For instance, improve internal resource management and road safety and infrastructure budget.

The ordinary person and the commuter in Puducherry felt a sense of relief. People got back what belonged to them.

Sirens ought to remain for emergency vehicles only, not for people in a position of power. We made that the rule.

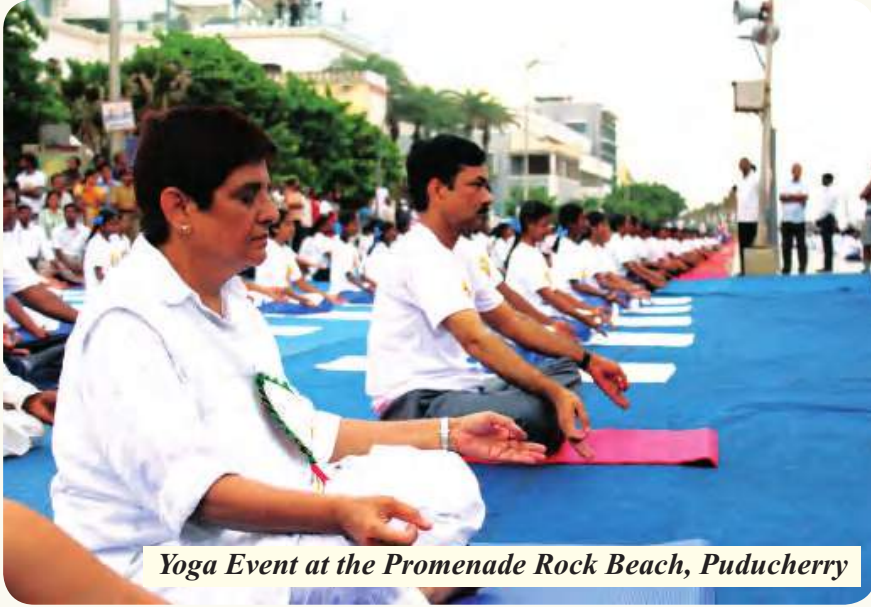
Leadership must send out an early message of work style that promotes care, consideration, collaboration, cooperation, and civility.



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CHAPTER 10

FIRST MASS EVENT



Yoga Event at the Promenade Rock Beach, Puducherry

The directions from the Prime Minister's Office were clear. We celebrated mass yoga day, where a large number of students participated in the International Day of Yoga in June 2016.

I called for a meeting with Ragesh Chandra, Secretary of Education, to review his planning. I was happy to see him well organised. He had mobilised the school fraternity to the maximum. We decided to use the entire beach walk stretching over 1,000 meters.

It was a very colourful sight of the beach. The roads bedecked in carpets of red and blue as thousands of students assembled to perform Yoga on International Yoga Day. Nearly 6,000 students gathered from both urban and rural areas.

I joined them personally with Ms. Anisha Pasheer Khan, Vice-Chancellor Puducherry University, Mr. S.K. Gautam, the Director-General of Police, and seniors from other departments.

We all performed nearly 20 asanas from ‘talasana’, ‘vrikshasana’, to ‘pavanmuktaasana’, and ‘savaasana’. The asanas were followed by ‘pranayama’ and meditation. We ended the yoga session with a prayer.

It was my first such event as a Lt. Governor when I saw thousands of school children getting introduced to Yoga in one single day event. It displayed the organising capability of the administration, particularly of Ragesh Chandra. Unfortunately, he did not live long to continue serving. I did not see a repeat of such organisational calibre. None of the subsequent yoga days came close to such execution.

Sadly, the entire cabinet chose to give it a miss. When asked by the media why they skipped such an important event, they said they had to be somewhere else.

An MLA reportedly told the press, “the elected government is uncomfortable with the growing popularity of the Lt. Governor”.

Raj Nivas did not stop at one single day of yoga practice. We carried on with yoga events in the lawns of Raj Nivas.

Leadership never misses an opportunity to participate in grassroots activities that involve people. They seek out such occasions, experiences, and support them.



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CHAPTER 11

THE 10:00 AM THINK TANK



Inited the system of daily 10:00 am meetings in my core team. This meeting gave a running start to the Lt. Governor's office.

Our small unit consisted of G. Theva Neethi Dhas, Secretary to the Lieutenant Governor; G.Srinivas, Additional Secretary; R.Sridharan Private Secretary; Dr. Amrita Bahl, Officer on Special Duty (OSD); Mrs. Asha Gupta, Comptroller Raj Nivas. J.Kumaran, Public Relations Officer; and Kartikeyan, Aide-de-camp (ADC) were gradually co-opted.

As I walked in for the first meeting into my office, I saw the officers standing near the formal LG's desk. It had a stately chair, draped in maroon velvet with the national emblem embossed, reiterating the significance of the occupant and his responsibility towards the nation.

I requested the officers to come towards the conference table at the east end of the office. This rectangular table had twelve chairs around

it. It gave a setting for discussions. The officers hesitatingly came and sat around it with a bit of wonder in their eyes, reflecting - ‘Now what? will there be another SWOT like the one the senior officers had taken before the oath-taking?’

There was no SWOT. On the contrary, it was about knowing each other.

I told them I believe in trusting relationships and delegation. And that we are to work as an effective team. I assured them of my total accountability for all my decisions.

I will expect confidentiality and fearless advice in return.

Since that day, our daily 10:00 am meetings took place around the conference table. The stately formal table was used sparingly, either for special conferences or for children on memorable occasions, as a photo opportunity for them to aspire to be the Lt. Governor one day.

The Team members took time to warm up to a non-hierarchical setting. I saw them gradually increase their contributions, add value to the group, and emerge as a ‘Think Tank’. All core members had sufficient experience working in the Puducherry Administration and were aware of the challenges in governance. They knew Puducherry like the back of their hand. They were the insiders.

We began our meetings with a review of the previous day, daily happenings coming to notice, policy issues surfacing, news that has appeared in the newspapers, and any other development.

The PRO posted all relevant news clips in the WhatsApp group and made a group email for the benefit of public officials as a daily ‘GONG’.

Officers had access to all essential news clips drawn from Puducherry newspapers. Including a link to the 8:00 am All India Radio news and the main news of the Press Information Bureau of the Central Government.

The media for us was a watchdog.



We went through the letters to the editor too. Everything mattered. Every time we responded to all such reporting, it invigorated the social conscience. People knew we were taking cognisance of relevant news reports. The journalists were aware that we would go back to the source of the issues. The reporters felt acknowledged when their news stories led to corrections. They felt valued.

Misreporting was always sent a rejoinder.

Matters reported led to personal field visits and checks. We occasionally invited the concerned officer mentioned to get a first-hand understanding of the matter. The officer's presence was to nudge the departments to perform, amend and remain vigilant.

We daily inched forward towards improving internal alignment within the departments. All were wary of the 10:00 am meetings, minuted and circulated.

The 10:00 am meeting integrated Raj Nivas with the three outlying regions of Puducherry, namely Karaikal, Mahe, and Yanam. It helped

us strengthen internal coordination to complete the set targets in the Swachh Bharat movement to stop open defecation, increase housing construction for the poor, and promote digitisation. The enhanced internal coordination produced qualitative and quantitative outcomes.

The 10:00 am Team planned and kept to the calendar of activities for Raj Nivas. We all looked forward to observing festivals and conducting events.

The Chief Secretary later transferred did not underpin any follow-up; instead, showed callousness. Nor did the ministers of the day display interest, despite repeated requests to collaborate. But they were kept in the loop. Lack of interest from the political establishment did not deter Team Raj Nivas from remaining steadfast.

‘TEAM RAJ NIVAS’ was a name we gave ourselves. Each member worked with utmost dedication and due diligence. We, the members, knew the day’s priorities, the plan for the day next, and the days ahead. All in tandem. All in direct communication within and outside. All together for a higher purpose - ‘Prosperous Puducherry.’

The leadership that infuses energy into the Team empowers them to accomplish the most.



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CHAPTER 12

THE OPEN HOUSE



As the Lt. Governor of Puducherry, I was to determine whether Raj Nivas remained a remnant of a ‘Royal Palace’, a dream destination for public officials and laypeople - one where visitors to Puducherry could get a mere glimpse outside the aesthetic iron grills painted white?

I sensed, Puducherry needed demonstrative and accessible administration.

I ensured easy access to Raj Nivas with a security system in place. Since my last assignment as Special Secretary to the then Lt. Governor, Delhi, Mr. Tajendra Khanna, I had opened my office for easy access to the commoners. I knew how essential it is for any high office to serve in letter and spirit. As the Lt. Governor, I did what was needed.

Open house for the laypersons in need was to be an expression of devotion and respect for the people of Puducherry. I always believed that all public institutions like Raj Nivas should prioritise people.

Open House, therefore, will open the doors of Raj Nivas to people.

I shared the concept of the Open House with my Team in the 10:00 am meeting. They loved it. The office issued a press release notifying the people of Puducherry.

We planned an effortless entry to the LG office. All petitioners for personal hearings could come to Raj Nivas, Monday to Thursday, between 4:00 pm to 7:00 pm. They could take the token number at the gate and enter. The entrants would be security checked and ushered in. The first hour was for those who emailed my office for a personal meeting or invitation, followed by petitioners on their turn.

We used the lounge of Raj Nivas for the visitors to be comfortably seated. Their complaints were recorded in the Petition Management system to keep track.



The Petitioners in the Raj Nivas Lounge

While waiting for their turn, they could watch the Television; while the housekeeping staff would serve them water, green tea, and biscuits.

All applicants were heard directly by me. My officers and I stood behind a chest-high wooden table. We got this table specially made to provide me with a suitable height and breadth to write on while

standing and listening to the visiting petitioners.



Open House in Progress

The Additional Private Secretary, G. Srinivas, assisted me from 4:00 pm to 5:00 pm for visitors, and R. Sridhar, my Private Secretary, joined in for petitioners from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm. Both officers kept notes of deliberations for follow-ups.

In the early weeks and months, hearings went on for extended periods. We were clearing a significant backlog. It was at times draining and worrying how we would meet the rising expectation from the visitors. We endured it one day at a time while making inroads.

Srinivas or Sridhar would translate for me, who spoke only Tamil. On hearing each one, we took decisions.

We would either contact the concerned officer on the phone to seek the petitioner an appointment or give him a specially designed and printed reference slip to meet the officer concerned. If the matter were

urgent, we would request the officer visit the Raj Nivas to understand his perspective.

I still remember the first day of our Open House meeting. The visitors included a young mother who sought our help to admit her child to a private school. A senior citizen complained about the nuisance from an arrack shop next to his house. Next came a group of young students seeking my advice to prepare for the Union Public Service Examination (UPSC). A batch of traders complained of extortion rackets and collections made by some notorious characters. More petitions followed, and we dealt with one and all.

As I was winding up for the day, a group of women came to me. They were from the Ashram guest house located 200 meters from Raj Nivas off the Promenade Beach. They complained against the placement of a police barricade, due to which any guest arriving with luggage could not drive into the Guest House.

They suggested a slight repositioning of the barrier to meet the traffic requirements and remove the inconvenience caused to their visitors.

They mentioned how they had been requesting the police for several months to no avail.

Hearing them, I thought, why not walk across and see? No point asking for a report. Each visitor mattered.

I told them, "Let us walk down and see."

I loved the walk after a long day of standing without a break. My ADC informed the Police Chief, Mr. Praveer Ranjan, to join me at the spot to examine it jointly.

A few meters of adjustment of the barrier resolved the problem bringing immediate relief to the neighbourhood. The visit paid off.

The sensitivity with which we responded to each petition in the Open House came as a relief to people. It also jolted the system out of its slumber.

Many were hoping we would soon run out of steam when we began. On the contrary, the energy increased. We identified chronic issues that needed a multidisciplinary or ‘GatiShakti’ approach to grasp and resolve conjointly. Days and timings were scheduled for such team visits. Morning weekend rounds concerning municipal issues got their targets from the open house.

In the first six months, along with municipal and civic issues, land grabbing complaints were severe. The cheats were taking advantage of the records that remained undigitised. The system, therefore, was a den of corruption and harassment for the weak.

We co-opted Ms. Stella, a Protection Officer, for responding to domestic violence and family issues.

The addition of a paralegal desk taking over civil disputes provided relief to the police department. If the grievance was genuine, the objective was to respond to the appropriate domain agency. Earlier, this category of petitioners was clueless about where to go.



Ms. Stella, Protection Officer

As we progressed, we saw that the service matters were coming in considerable numbers, along with civic amenities and land disputes. We decided to keep all Thursdays exclusively for public servants. By this, they could get exclusive hearings. There was a deluge of complaints of unpaid arrears. The concerned departments had expended their gratuities, holding back increments, reimbursements, provident funds and more. Political recommendations for irregular backdoor appointments were being exposed, and so also the personnel departments that delayed promotions violated recruitment rules and temporary positions were not regularised for long. Staff on expired contracts remained engaged; approved orders not passed, files pending for want of decisions, and more.

The state of affairs was very distressing. Some came and even gave me their petition in a sealed envelope and went.

The service matters fell in the domain of the Administrator. It was my responsibility to set it right. The visiting public servants gave me sufficient insight into the magnitude of the rot in the system as I heard them one by one.

The Right to Information activists became proactive as they knew that Raj Nivas listened, appreciated, and acted upon their inputs. It unnerved the bureaucracy and the political establishment.

The Open House opened a pandora's box and revived hope as people were willing to be patient and work along.

I wondered how to deal with a below-par public service in the early months and an increasingly indifferent political establishment. I still had to build a rapport with the rank and file. There was no emotional

connection yet. I was in a very detached system with a legacy of widespread nepotism.

Whenever we had a recurring complaint, we arranged a meeting of the petitioner with the concerned officer/desk in the Raj Nivas lounge itself.



We held a defaulter's session to sensitise officials and remind them that the Open House was there to stay. Therefore earlier they understood this, the better. The choice was theirs.

They got the message loud and clear.

The Open House started to be a house of a parent. Once when four boys came to the Open House, I asked them what made them come to me? They said their mother told them so. I asked for what? They replied that when they asked their mother for hockey sticks, she said,

“Go to LG Madam; she will give you the hockey sticks.”



And sure enough, they got the hockey sticks from us the very next day. Ms. Asha Gupta, Comptroller Household, arranged to deliver them the following day.

No child visiting with parents went without stationery or a small gift or even a photograph on her birthday or if he came with his medals to show me. The PRO would inform the media to share the story of winners.



The Open House progressively became a catalyst in activating the need to address the people’s grievances. It sensitised the system to respond to all equally. Our perseverance brought about a remarkable change in the way people started to connect with public officials on their own. Moreover, they knew Raj Nivas would always be there as a backup.



We kept the Open House functioning amidst the Covid-19 pandemic by making it virtual. People made full use of this opportunity.



Our friends in the political world kept crying foul on sustained communication till the last day of my work in Puducherry.

I firmly believe that being accessible and open to listening and learning is a critical hallmark of progressive leadership, placing people at the centre of all processes.

Petitions Received in Open House During My Tenure

Issues	Number of Petitions
Civic Issues	1381
Service Matters	1976
Land Disputes	1109
Against Shop and Organization	1537
Miscellaneous	1240
Encroachments	619
Housing	513
Suggestion and Recommendations	744
Family Disputes	638
Courtesy / Invitations	1242
TOTAL	10999



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CHAPTER 13

GOVERNANCE AMIDST PEOPLE WEEKEND ROUNDS



Progressively, Pandora's box was opening, turning the administration upside down.

It troubled part of the political formations, vested interests, and recalcitrant public servants. It broke the 'silence of the lambs.' The guilty were running for cover - the land grabbers, the non-performers, the encroachers, the lazy, and the dishonest.

People came forth with evidence of dereliction of duties.

I had options to either seek the paper reports first or visit the sites on the ground. Additionally, I thought, why not place people at the centre as they know the problem and will be there to report follow-up action.

Since the Raj Nivas had already filled its weekdays with meetings and reviews, I, with a member from Team Raj Nivas and concerned

officials, resolved to devote our time to visit these ‘sickly’ locations over the weekends.

I chose 6:00 am in summers and 7:00 am in winters. The purpose of early morning hours was to see the grievance on-site with the main petitioners and leave the site before onlookers caused distractions. Further follow up could be done in offices.

The first two weekend morning rounds were to sites requested by the elected members of the Legislative Assembly. The first round was to Grand Canal, a long reeking stormwater drain. The others were to the two colonies, Krishna Nagar and Rainbow Nagar, built-in low-lying areas and flooded even on a single heavy downpour.



The Grand Canal

These sites revealed severe official neglect of regular duties, supervision, and gross delays in engineering correction by the concerned departments.

Without my saying anything, the sites spoke for themselves. The public officials were both nervous and defensive. They were getting the message that they must act and get work done. They have to be more in the field for direct supervision.

The challenge was how to get work done by the staff who was not used to working much. The officers hoped my passion for being on-site to see and resolve multidisciplinary would fade away.

Over time many public officials had got used to little work with full pay. It was all set to recast.

Week after week, Team Raj Nivas went to the putrefying and mosquito-infested ponds, dying lakes, dry tanks, mounds of garbage dumps, site to site, people to people. Our visits raised sensitivity and anger over rotting issues.



It is interesting to share how many in the bureaucracy and the political establishment realised what we were unearthing. The bureaucracy's top levels, barring exceptions, remained thick-skinned. The middle ranks came out of compulsion, except a few genuinely wanting to see a change. These officers also knew they better show up or fear missing on the WhatsApp group, which the media may also report.

Despite their primary responsibility, the political leadership remained indifferent to weekend rounds. Instead, they tried to stop officials from accompanying me.

Many times I had to work with a single junior officer on site. I did not make issues with it.

I could see why these representatives were not joining in as the exposure was not befitting them. How would they clarify to their people why the problem was left languishing?

For instance, post-Tsunami, a fully air-conditioned fish market built with World Bank Funding was idling and not allotted to the eligible fishermen. The Honorable Ministers could not decide on allocations. The fishermen and women continued to sell on the roadsides, blocking traffic. My visit laid bare the issue.

Another market fully built with enormous funding was lying deserted because of no power connection. It was due to the political representative's lack of coordination and follow-up. Instead of setting it right, they blocked my inspection and shouted slogans to go back. I went ahead.

Similarly, I visited a park in a colony that had a colossal tree trunk fallen, leaving the football ground bisected. My visit inflamed the local area representative, who called out crudely objecting to the volunteers having removed the fallen tree trunk when this was under his jurisdiction. Indeed it was, but why did he not get the field cleared all these months despite people requesting him for recovery.

Yet other places in neglect demanding weekend attention were significant water bodies- the Velrampet, Kanagan lake, Kirumampakkam lake, Bahur lake, Ariakuppam lake and Ossudu lake.

The essential water tanks and water storage sources were dump yards until our repeated visits. The local area representatives never evinced interest in their rejuvenation. I was anguished to see the people's concerns in disdain.



We were making a repository of every visit. On returning to the office, the Private Secretary summarised the round visit and circulated a note for follow-up. The PRO issued a media release. The press reported it. The more the people read, the more spirited and involved they felt. A stage came when we started to revisit earlier sites as we were running out of new ones.

We, along with students, went driving, walking, busing, and cycling. Students from the NCC, NSS, Puducherry University, school children, NGOs, volunteers, cops, interns, and even visitors joined us.

We planted trees, played volleyball, and stopped for a cup of tea with people. We visited temples and churches to check the maintenance of their tanks. Through a letter to the editor, we ‘discovered’ a hidden forest trail not publically known. Our visit gave it the prominence it deserved.

The more we did, there was much more to do.

Before leaving Puducherry, Team Raj Nivas had completed 260 Weekend Morning Rounds.

Here is the picture of my 259th round, which focused on road safety. The last one was to my favourite waterbody, Velrampet lake, where I began my crusade for ‘Prosperous Puducherry’.

Regrettably, I did not see organised activism in Puducherry as needed, barring a few exceptions like PondyCan led by Probir Banerjee and others. The key reason was that the High Court was a 3-hour drive away from Puducherry and the legal support was expensive. If the city had a single bench of the High Court like in Madurai, weekend rounds would not have been necessary. Legal Notices would have got the work done.

Still, Puducherry cleared up appreciably, thanks to the various departments, which delivered. For this, commendation goes to all public officials who made the change. They were being appreciated in the WhatsApp groups as well.

I am convinced that the ideas and solutions lie where the problem is. The field triggers all your five senses. The more concerns you wish to address, the more you shall be field-oriented in any service.



Weekend Rounds



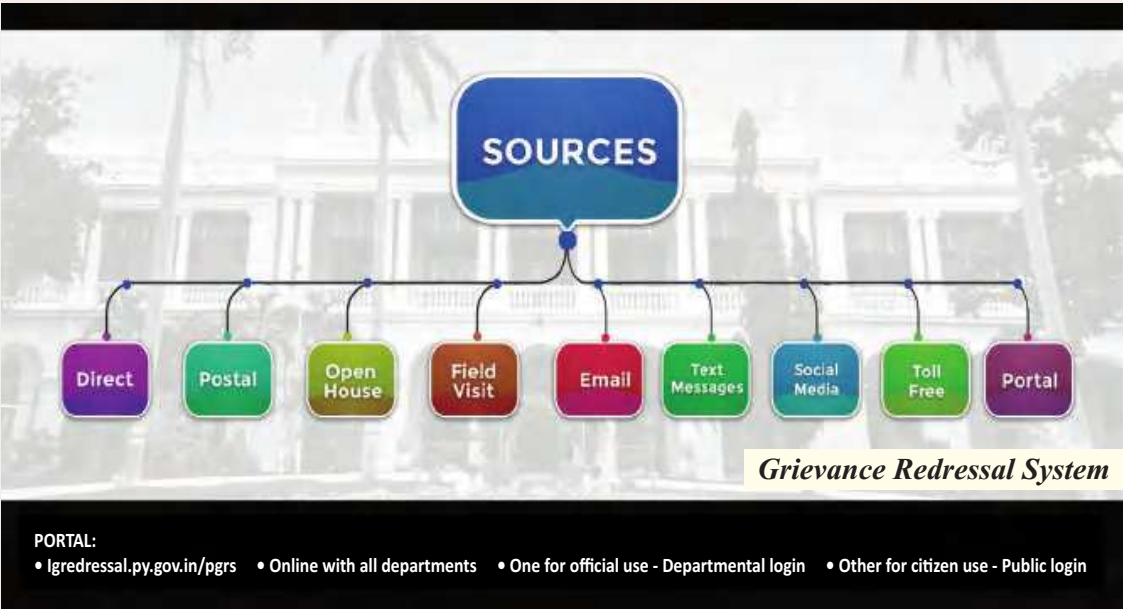
Weekend Rounds



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CHAPTER 14

COMMON MAN HEARD



Puducherry, as I saw, did not have any formulated grievance redressal structure.

There was no integrated system of analysis at any level. What existed was a casual, unorganised and disjointed arrangement. I saw this on my physical visits to several public dealing offices, the collectorate, municipal services, police station and even control rooms.

Grievance redressal was no one’s concern; the poor and the commoner without a VIP reference did not matter. He would run from pillar to post in desperation, looking for pulls and pressures. He had no faith and trust. Most of the time, he paid the transactional cost out of compulsion. Corruption prevailed.

People appeared reconciled to the situation. Be it threats from a bully with criminal records or rotting garbage outside the homes, overflowing sewers and drains, or swarming mosquito breeding ponds

in their neighbourhoods and within temples or a water body being encroached for allotment of housing sites to carve vote banks.

I did not see people demanding a predictable system to redress their grievances. For instance, where does a householder go if his land or house has been grabbed? To the same Police Station that may have facilitated it? Or the same lobbies instigated it as a 'Benami' - fake identity. Similarly, a business establishment, a victim of extortion, may have to depend on the public leader who could be backing it.

Another painful issue was where do the medical students who were denied admission to private medical colleges go if they could not pay the exorbitant fee demanded by the mafias. Who would listen to them? The legal challenge was not affordable. The Madras High Court was a five hours drive by road.

Still worse, when a senior sexually harassed a woman employee, she contemplated giving up her job because she knew no one. She was unsure if she would find any justice anywhere.

Family members who urgently needed to file repatriation of their kin from overseas due to harassment by their employees were unaware of where to access the External Affairs Ministry, Government of India, New Delhi.

I did not see any responsive and publicised systems in place for the visiting tourists or passengers at the bus depots or the railway station when tourism had been the bedrock of the economy of Puducherry. I experienced this directly when I visited the railway station to see what kind of transport was available for night passengers.

The auto-rickshaw drivers' union obstructed state transport bus from plying a night service at the railway station. They wanted to retain total control over the hapless passengers alighting at night. They

would overcharge and extort, leaving no options in the late hour. The public transport bus drivers were threatened if they plied.

Despite knowing that Puducherry needed tourists for its economy, they were aggressively supported by their local MLA. I ordered the police station staff to start the night bus service.

Within the first three days of my taking charge, I visited The Grand Canal, an iconic French-built stormwater canal running through the elite town called the White Town from French days. It stank to the extent that its foul odour reached the Raj Niwas, a good one kilometre away, dependent on the direction of the wind. The area MLA came seeking grievance redressal. He requested direct intervention.

It was nobody's concern. Most of the public officials were afraid to take any initiatives lest they may intrude into the political space of the elected representatives. Addressing every grievance was a transaction made by a political representative. It was a favour to be paid back by the person concerned, when the time demanded, every five years. (sic)

A few exceptional officers came into the firing line of the elected representatives if they advised residents to become self-reliant and form their resident welfare associations.

I saw officers get fired and departmentally harassed with contempt notices served. The reason was that they did not take prior permission from the elected representative to speak to the residents.

“Where do I begin?” I pondered.

The grievance redressal system at Raj Nivas had opened systems to receive complaints from all directions, all sources, in person, snail mail or through social media tools. It became transformative when departments understood that all complaints were significant. Some key officers played a commendable role.

Grievance Redressal System



There were several sources of grievances. The Open House was one primary source. Others were emails, police control room, toll-free numbers, WhatsApp number of the Chief Grievances officer, and the departments, including mine, which was fully accessible.

No message went unacknowledged. We used technology to the maximum. Every complaint was entered into the Petition Monitoring System (PMS) and was traceable.

We progressively went to complete documentation and tracking of every single complaint. It required multiple follow-ups, attitudinal and cultural shifts.

Whichever petition called for spot visits was done appropriately, depending on the issues in hand. But matters had to be resolved. Cases pending for decades started to get settled. The magic worked. The number of grievances increased as people began to trust the system.

The hope and expectations of an ordinary man increased.

As the city became safer, cleaner, and collaborative, more people felt served. We fought Covid using the same tools.

My mobile phone was full of messages, and I responded.

One person who stood out amongst all was Dr. Bascarane - the Chief Grievances Officer and a member of Team Raj Nivas.



A serving Police Officer, Dr. Bascarane and his control room team worked round the clock to track and coordinate with all departments. He was available on call 24×7. He maintained 2 WhatsApp phones to respond.

Dr. Bascarane additionally made a coalition of officers of various departments. Because of this system, we rose to the challenges of Covid- 19 (phase one) and the ‘Nivar’ cyclone that hit Puducherry.

Team Raj Nivas always remained fully accessible.

During the Covid times, we did an online hearing of the grievances.



However, I got a digital eye due to excessive reading on the screen. I had an assistant read the messages and respond for several weeks. Arvind Eye Care Hospital in Puducherry took special care of me. However, I have been on daily maintenance drops since then.

Before I closed my tenure in Puducherry, we heard 38,068 grievances in all categories.

We heard the ordinary person fully in a manner that will stay in his memory forever.

Grievances - Year Wise Report

Classification	2016*	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021*	Total
Civic Issues	1025	2207	848	578	618	64	5340
Service Matter	963	1288	1128	786	1089	210	5464
Education	506	733	812	476	481	113	3121
Law and Order	467	781	736	689	802	85	3560
Land Dispute	455	563	540	483	688	94	2823
Government Servants	342	340	633	489	631	86	2521
Shop and Organisation	308	408	538	358	542	101	2255
Miscellaneous (Delay payment & Tender)	305	535	553	274	308	60	2035
Encroachment	258	259	320	316	332	52	1537
Liquor shop Issues	192	187	135	81	127	22	744
Suggestion	171	185	362	317	548	65	1648
Illegal Activities	147	259	246	234	194	22	1102
Public Interest	129	130	95	88	57	1	500
Welfare Activities	124	123	326	278	415	59	1325
Family Disputes	123	135	93	118	146	19	634
Employment	122	152	238	142	194	35	883
Agriculture Issues	102	96	68	68	51	18	403
Labour Issue	66	84	209	273	448	69	1149
Traffic Issues	53	62	44	56	25	4	244
Issue of Certificates	33	33	87	74	89	23	339
Financial Assistance	16	16	45	49	82	8	216
Court Issues	14	14	12	28	24	4	96
Covid issue – Migrated workers & Violation of Rule	0	0	0	0	129	0	129
Total	5921	8590	8068	6255	8020	1214	38068

*June 2016 to Mid-February, 2021



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CHAPTER 15

PEDALLING FOR A CLEAN CITY



Team Raj Nivas Goes Cycling

Credible Communications in all directions are the basis of trust and confidence. Open house, weekend rounds, grievance redressal system, phone numbers available for WhatsApp sharing, group emails, SMS messaging, and toll-free numbers were all part of the basket. To this was added cycling on the streets of Puducherry.

Cycling down the streets of Puducherry brought Raj Nivas closer to ordinary people. It enabled an instant grassroots connection. We could stop anywhere and greet and meet. And even strike a conversation and exchange pleasantries.

On the cycles, we as a ‘team of many’ improved sanitation, filled up potholes and increased police presence. It also spread a sense of security that their LG did not need an armed guard.

It promoted cycling in the town as a valuable eco-friendly choice for commuting.

It brought together many public officials, volunteers, NCC cadets, Puducherry University students, school children, NGOs, tourists, beat police officers, and others in a very creative and energetic way.

It added adventure to the morning rounds. We were leaving memories behind.

Blog of the day

I wondered what if all Municipal Commissioners bike early hours of weekend/s or choose the days they wish and drive past heaps of garbage? Will it remain or vanish? It will vanish.

If the officials' bike around the town even once a week to see the change instead of going for a morning walk or to a gym, a public park, or a beach, it will make grass-root staff work acknowledged.

People too will cooperate. Once appreciated, a positive change will come about. It will bring in shared responsibility.

But change will happen when public officials in top positions are proactive, visible and committed.

Then they become mentors for the impressionable youth.

May 22, 2017

From the desk of LG Puducherry







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CHAPTER 16

DIRTY PUDUCHERRY



Dirty Velrampet Lake



When I first visited this drying and dying lake, full of human excreta, I saw pigs roaming around in heaps of garbage

It was called the Velrampet Lake. The people in the vicinity used this for garbage dumping and open defecation. I visited this place within the first few weeks of taking responsibility in Puducherry.

I saw a situation of utter callousness and wondered how long it would take to reverse it. It angered me from within.

Officers seemed to have given up. The multiple departments had neither the dedicated staff nor any earmarked budget to maintain it. Reviving looked like a dream.

The local elected representative had the fishing contract to extract even the fingerlings (baby fish) visible in the thin stream. He was not bothered about the area's future; all were wary of him being a local bully.

Mr. G. Srinivas, my Additional Secretary, accompanying me, sent the MLA a message to come to the spot for an urgent meeting. My officer explained my views in Tamil. He told him that the water body had to be rescued, revived, and cleaned up. Hence, it could not be business as usual. The MLA appeared taken aback in Lt. Governor's presence and reconciled to the possibilities of termination of his contract.

I told the senior policemen present on-site to ask the piggery owner to take the pigs back. They were from a neighbouring piggery, as suggested by the cops. I told the public officials to start the clean-up, get garbage vans and deploy the required multi-tasking staff to hasten the process. And that I shall be revisiting to review progress. The message was clear. It must change.

I went inside the neighbourhood colony and saw a newly constructed community toilet, which was locked. I wanted a valid reason. The people informed me that there was no one to maintain the toilet. The key was with a local temple priest. Imagine a community toilet constructed with public money but not in use, instead all defecating in the open only because the municipal officials did not put a maintenance plan in place.

I co-opted the nearby school boys to join in the ‘shramdaan’. I could not reconcile with the situation. I felt accountable for changing this, not knowing how long it would take.



I checked with the residents who had gathered to see all that was happening. I asked the people surrounding me what they wanted? They all showed their eagerness to use the community toilet. I asked them who would take charge to maintain? A woman promptly stepped forward, showing her willingness to take control. She was one of the self-help group women leaders who had a good rapport with the people who endorsed her and resolved the payment charges. I then called the priest for the key.

I took it and handed it to the woman who had volunteered. I embraced her for the volunteering spirit. I told the gathering they should not go into the Velrampet lake to defecate while explaining the reasons. They all committed not to.



Lady Volunteer From The Self- Help Group

The Chief Engineer offered to fence the area urgently to stop incursions into the water body, knowing I shall come for reviews. They saw me quite upset over this situation.

The survey showed that 70% of house owners who had built houses had not included toilets as a part of their household, either using the space for their living or considering it impure to have a toilet inside the house. Or, they were culturally using toilet time for social networking. Furthermore, in a comparative city-wise survey on sanitation conducted by the Government of India, Puducherry was at the tail end.

The PM's call for Swachh Bharat and the need for Indians to stop the practice of open defecation, urging people to have their toilets, was getting nationwide attention.

Once the clear diktat came from the Prime Minister, there was no looking back. Liberal sums of money were budgeted to all the States and UTs incentivising toilet construction. The States, too, had to contribute. With deadlines given, linking the target dates with the birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, everybody was on time-bound notice.

The PM Office directly monitored the progress in implementing the Swachh Bharat Movement. We, too, were on a day-to-day review and monitoring of the construction of household toilets in urban and rural areas.

Since Puducherry did not have local municipal bodies and the gram panchayats, the brunt of this work became a direct responsibility of the front line public officials. Funds were not a constraint for this cause and facilitated the number of toilets constructed.

These were geotagged for central agencies to oversee. Niti Ayog was closely supervising the progress made. We were time-bound to declare areas Open Defecation-Free (ODF). A team came from New Delhi to assess and rate us. We were named and shamed too. These visits compelled the public servants to deliver.

As the Administrator, I went all out to make Swachh Bharat central to my weekend rounds. The majority of my visits went into areas that needed drastic sanitation. We were clearing mountains of accumulated filth.

We were on track in our mission of making Unclean Puducherry a Prosperous Cleaner Puducherry. Because now every citizen wanted it. A sustained watch did it. It was now a cumulative success.

My office was determined to keep Puducherry clean and open defecation-free (ODF) despite vested interests coming in the way. We warded off many attempts to disrupt. We did not compromise on it, intervening with full might, to the annoyance of particular powerful interests.

We Integrated NSS, NCC, volunteers, university students, women self-help groups, youth clubs, and other organised groups to promote 'shramdaan'. It worked. People became aware by repeated messaging using all tools for communication.

The Swachhta Corporation workers, engaged in cleaning the city, were energised. They joined in willingly. Their rank and file mainly

comprised women who understood the determination behind the clean Puducherry drive.

Their Director was part of my morning weekend rounds. He and his colleagues were cycling with us. We, too, gave them an appreciation for their work by recognising them from time to time, celebrating women's day and other festivals together. We got donors to provide gifts for them. They got a free medical card from JIPMER, also called the All India Institute of Medical Sciences of the South.

Our collective endeavours helped build thousands of household toilets in Puducherry. Our water bodies, by this relentless pursuit, became cleaner. However, this took considerable time.

This sanitation drive turned out to be critical in Covid management. It mitigated colossal suffering.



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CHAPTER 17

REMOVING SHIT-A FAILURE



Day after day, as part of the cleanliness drive in Puducherry, we removed dog shit all the time. The latest we heard from our sanitation workers was that night sweeping was exceedingly risky because of the stray dog menace. It was something to be concerned about as they were on a contract for night cleaning and could be penalised for not doing so. Hence, how does one resolve this?

The Supreme Court was currently hearing this sensitive matter due to certain Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed regarding violating human life versus status quo by non-state animal lovers. The Honourable Court commented during the hearings of misplaced compassion in letting street dogs roam around in public places.

It angered me from within. I saw a situation of utter callousness and wondered how long it would take to reverse it.

The matter is still pending with the apex court. The country awaits their final views keeping in mind cases of stray dogs mauling the old and young versus those who want the street dogs to remain free to roam in their respective territories. While caring for animals, we must not compromise on human safety, that of the vulnerable.

Agreeably, the Swachh Bharat movement in Puducherry needed to have its streets clean and safe from stray dog attacks. It had a massive influx of tourists walking the beach, visiting heritage buildings, tourist places, and popular marketplaces.

Regrettably, the Puducherry animal welfare department still does not maintain safe places for street dogs and stray cattle where animal lovers could come and feed. The UT has enough surplus food to feed the animals once linked with hotels and restaurants willing to collaborate.

Puducherry is duty-bound to protect one and all from such threats. It requires some tough and responsible decision making by the political Government as sentiments are extreme on both sides. I failed to resolve this issue as there was no meeting of minds, be it the dog lovers or the people's representatives.

Hence the dog shit will remain, and so will the threat of dog bites.

(Portions of this piece appeared in the NDTV Opinion Column then).



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CHAPTER 18

ALERTING THE CHIEF MINISTER

Letter to Chief Minister Regarding Open Defecation.

My Dear Hon'ble CM,

December 7, 2016

You have given a written commitment to our Honourable Prime Minister that you shall make Puducherry Open Defecation Free (ODF) by October 2, 2017. Our Honourable Prime Minister has tasked me to ensure that UT of Puducherry becomes his first UT to declare itself ODF. To achieve this, I have been putting collective efforts by various means, including weekend morning field rounds to filthy/stinking/defecating areas, both in urban and rural areas, besides several other measures. Therefore, while you have given a written commitment, I have been personally directed by our Honourable PM to achieve this. I do not see much time in our hands keeping in view the enormous task to construct 46,164 toilets in rural areas and 9000 in urban areas.

Both awareness generation, construction in all constituencies is a race against time. We also have strict protocols to follow before making ourselves open for an external audit.

Therefore, if we achieve it, we both must put in a combined effort.

Would you please step up your effort to ensure elected representatives are made accountable for this? I, too, will need to work with them individually across political affiliations to help realise the urgency and vital role they can play to achieve our combined mission.

I, therefore, request you to depute any of your representatives to be with me when I meet an MLA on a one-on-one basis, as per a preschedule to review ODF status in their respective constituency

I am a bit concerned about the short time in hand and the enormity of the challenge. I want to put us on fast-forward mode now rather than miss the bus.

**With Best Wishes,
Kiran**

Cc. PMO, UHMO

His casual attitude was a revelation for me.

The HCM got someone in power at the centre to tell me not to hold the meeting. I did not understand then the why of it.

The meetings did not happen.



CHAPTER 19

MAKE PONDY CLEAN, OR I LEAVE



It was Sunday. I was on my regular 6:00 am weekend inspection round in Puducherry since a clean, safe, and orderly Puducherry had been a mission for me. I was on a revisit to the Velrampet lake site to inspect the progress in its cleaning up.

I found that all the tasks planned during the previous inspection had made no progress. I gave a piece of my mind to the few junior officers present. The Chief Engineer and the Secretary concerned were missing. I left the place in a huff, wondering if this was the situation after a Lt. Governor's inspection; who else can step in to get things done in the system hierarchy. Moreover, was the political establishment interested at all in Swachh Puducherry?

I was now on my way to a social event full of youth participating in a marathon organised by JIPMER and Lions Clubs. I was to address these hundreds of young men and women. As I stepped on the road, I saw the streets littered with paper glasses and used water bottles.

Just the previous day, while on my tour to the Karaikal region, the Collector of Karaikal had told me that he would not have any funds to clean the city for my follow up visit.

A clean Puducherry appeared to be no one's concern. On the one hand, we were short of money; on the other, people continued to dirty the places while the establishment was indifferent.

I asked myself how many morning rounds it would take for an LG to bring about the change all around?

With this in mind, I asked the youth if they knew where I was coming from that morning?

I told them, "I still have excreta on my shoes after visiting a garbage dump yard at Velrampet Lake. I had been spending all my weekend mornings getting dirty drains and roads cleared. Neither you, the people, nor the public officials, are taking responsibility. If this continues, I will pack my bags and go. I am not here to clean filth. If we want to make Puducherry clean, then it must be us, not me alone."

There was a roar, "We won't let you go."

I said, "Well then, I give you time till next month-end, clean up your respective areas as Karaikal is doing now, and senior officers must join, or else I am going."

The rest is history. The Chief Minister met me and assured me that he would put systems in order. The Cabinet met, decided on methods of waste management. Even they realised the public servants' leadership was amiss.

I told the CM, “You are dealing with an office called Lt. Governor of Puducherry. Please join in and do your duties. I am here to strengthen you, to make Puducherry Swachh and Prosperous.”



CHAPTER 20

A BRAND AMBASSADOR- RAJINIKANTH



With Mrs. Latha Rajinikanth, Wife of Superstar Rajinikanth

I met Mrs. Latha Rajinikanth to explore the possibility of Mr. Rajinikanth, the superstar in Tamil Cinema, becoming the Brand Ambassador for promoting Swachh Puducherry Abhiyan.

The disgusting and pernicious habit of open defecation in outlying urban and rural areas was repulsive. With women drawing water from nearby wells, human excreta strewn in open spaces and floating in village ponds was a grave health hazard. Confronting this habituation meant taking this social evil head-on.

This slur on humanity needed more than circular orders. It needed aggressive amplitude of the consequences open defecation was causing due to householders constructing their dwellings without toilets. For men, it was not an issue. But what about women and girls? Was their safety not of paramount concern?

As part of the Prime Minister's Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, the Government of India provided funds to incentivise building toilets within homes and for community toilets in urban and rural areas. The fund were also for maintenance, compliance and ownership of these amenities.

Providing funds was not enough. How do you get them to agree to build toilets in their own space? Or use a community toilet, with or without a user charge.

A comprehensive behavioural shift was essential.

These were no easy answers. Extensive messaging was imperative from these responsible stakeholders; Political Representatives, Collectors, Block Development Officers, Municipal Public Officials, Women Self- Help Groups, NGOs and more.

Against this background, I asked for the most renowned artist of our times, Rajinikanth, to be the Brand Ambassador for the cause of Swachh Puducherry. I sensed his messaging would coax people to construct independently, with or without government assistance. It will accelerate behavioural change, crucial for putting this on the fast track. People needed to realise that this would save their children's lives, who were most vulnerable to diseases from defecated grounds.

It was the brain wave of the Collector of Puducherry, P Jawahar, who thought of testing it by offering just a few complimentary movie tickets for the film 'Kabali' starring Rajinikanth to those who volunteered to build their home toilets. His idea led to a riot.

Imagine what if Rajinikanth himself lent his face and voice to the change? If just a few tickets caught people's fancy, he could have accelerated the whole Abhiyan.

That is when I thought that Rajinikanth could be the brand ambassador.

I sought an appointment with him. Since he was travelling, his wife came. We met in Chennai.

I put forth the proposition. Mrs. Rajinikanth said she would go home and revert.

A few days later, I got the ‘Star’s’ message of polite regret.

When I took oath as the Lt. Governor of Puducherry, I gave the mantra “Prosperous Puducherry” as an-inclusive shared vision.

Little did I realise how exhausting it would be. But our attitude, internal willpower, and teamwork kept driving the change.





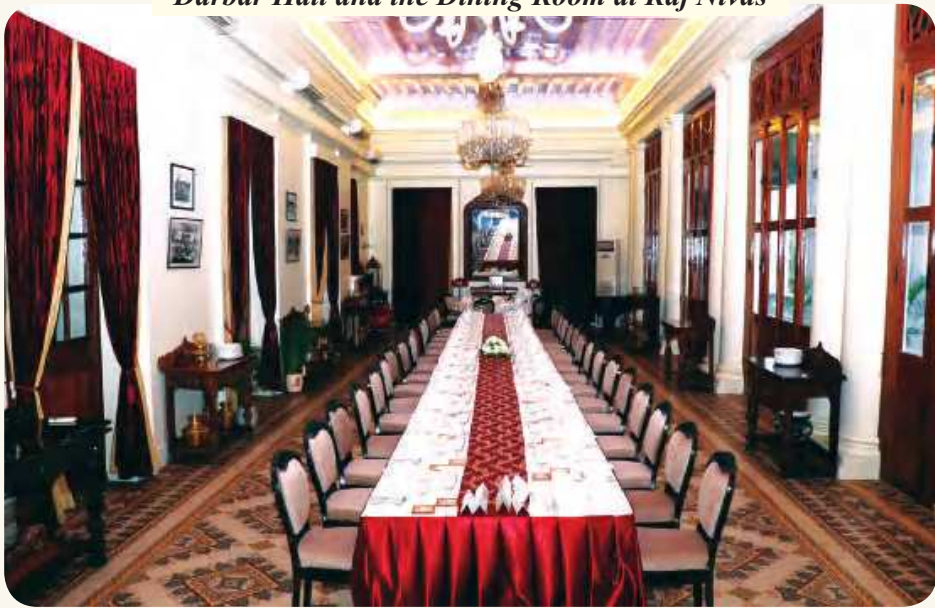
The Blots, Vulnerates And The Acrimony

CHAPTER 21

FIRST DINNER WITH THE CABINET



Darbar Hall and the Dining Room at Raj Nivas



Following the protocol, the newly elected Executives from the Legislative Assembly of Puducherry were invited for an official dinner with me at the Raj Nivas. Barring one, I knew none of the others.

I did not know Tamil, hence we had a language barrier. Of the six, only two could express reasonably well in English. After the pleasantries, my gender and background appeared to impede as we sat.

I asked them what they would like to discuss. I observed that the guests exchanged glances, perhaps seeking a collective nod to present their pre-plan. Then one of them, who was comparatively better at expressing in English, hesitatingly came to the point,

“Madam, we will now be sending you files on postings and transfers; and would expect you to approve them. Madam, this is what was the way in the past. And we ‘want’ you to do the same”.

I inferred their concern, sensing the underlying apprehension.

Taking my time, I said, “I understand your expectations. I shall examine your recommendations. My office will inform you of the decisions. In case you still have another viewpoint, please feel free to revert. I will always be open to improved decisions in the interest of the people.”

However, during conversations, one of them had a slip of the tongue on using the word ‘rubber stamp’.

When I asked them to explain, an MLA replied, “Madam, he did not mean that.”

They realised they had made a faux pas and felt embarrassed. The executive began to resolve amongst themselves, knowing I didn’t understand Tamil.

When I observed they had nothing else to say, I asked for the soup to be served and invited them to the dining hall for dinner to save them from further unease.

They now got busy eating.

One member of the Cabinet said, “I wish there were some fish too.”

They ate with their hands, licking their fingers, sparing not even their thumbs. I was at the head table. It was the most disgusting sight to

see how they were munching and belching. Once they could not take in more, they just got up and left. I went through the most unpleasant experience of my life. I pondered how I would deal with these elected ‘rulers’.

I had no confidante at home to offload this experience. I could not sleep, so I decided to pour out this ordeal in longhand on sheets of paper. For me, it was like a First Information Report (FIR) of what happened at the dinner. I wrote with a red ink pencil, not by design. The following morning, I handed those sheets of paper for safekeeping to Mr. Neethi Dhas, my secretary, whom I trusted. I still have them.

I read somewhere - two reasons we don’t trust people, one- we don’t know them, two - we know them.



CHIEF MINISTER JILTED THE PLEDGE

Dr. Kiran Bedi
Lieutenant Governor



Raj Nivas
Puducherry-605001

NEW YEAR PLEDGE

We, the public servants of the Government of Puducherry, on the dawn of the New Year 2017, commit ourselves to uphold the supremacy of the Constitution, maintain high ethical standards, take decisions solely in the public interest, and cause to use public resources efficiently, effectively and economically. We shall endeavour to perform and discharge our duties with the highest degree of professionalism and render service to the best of our abilities, maintaining absolute integrity, transparency and fair play.

On this solemn moment, we take the above pledge assuring our dedicated service to the people of Puducherry and the more significant cause of #Prosperous Puducherry.

The first week of 2017 began with an unexplainable response from the Honorable Chief Minister (HCM) on a worthwhile cause.

I invited the Chief Minister to Raj Nivas for the New Year Pledge duly within the conduct rules. He outrightly rejected it and instead questioned my holding the pledge meeting as the Lt. Governor.

He wrote back saying it was inappropriate for him to attend, giving no plausible reasons for turning it down.

I wondered what was wrong with this pledge. It was a sincere effort to bring senior leadership in alignment and inspire public officials to

commit to improving their responses to meet the needs of the people at large.

The CM lost an opportunity to bring together his public officials towards better administration.

I was only six months old as the Lt. Governor in Puducherry. In comparison, he was a native of the place and elected by the people to serve them.

We went ahead with the pledge without him.



CHAPTER 23

EARLY PERCEPTION



My first Governor's Conference was presided over by the then Honourable President of India, (Late) Shri Pranab Mukherjee.

Based on my seven months of experience as the Lt. Governor of the Union Territory, I was ominous in my presentation.

I presented my views virtually.

Honourable President Sir, Honourable Governors, Honourable Lt. Governors, and Respected friends,

I shall speak from the experience of my last seven months as Lt. Governor Puducherry about the challenges this responsibility presents to the incumbent for the territory's prosperity.

The people by and large and indeed the young generations do not know the fundamental rationale of Puducherry being a UT and what it implies.

How is it differently administered? The role and responsibility of the Elected and Central Government?

How much is it financially supported?

In UT, the Lt. Governor, by law, is not bound in certain decision-making subjects but consult only.

The Lt. Governor (unlike Governors of States) does not enjoy any immunity for acts of omission or commission. (As informed by Additional Solicitor General, Shri Sanjay Jain).

The political classes do not accept the legalese and choose to read selectively. Their public statements cause enormous confusion in the minds of the general public and government officials. The media presents information, which at times only adds to complexities.

Most of all, it impacts public officials. They feel sandwiched between two power centres.

Resultantly public services suffer. I have experienced this directly, where the Cabinet expects LG's position to be ceremonial only. Or be a 'rubber stamp', to quote them.

They refuse to reconcile that the Lt. Governor is an Administrator with clearly laid down legal responsibilities in service, financial and policy matters.

Sir, I submit that we need to identify well laid down strategies to educate all concerned, primarily strengthening the training of State Civil Service officers. They are found confused. Secretaries of Departments often ask, 'Is the LG empowered to seek this information?'

Other few steps I respectfully propose are:

Wherever the Government of India invests resources, in-kind or financial, we need not wait for the annual reports of the Comptroller and Auditor General but conduct periodic social and performance audits by regular, frequent visits to ensure integrity and non-diversion of resources.

Or else, in some instances, losses may go unrecoverable (as is happening) or not get remedied in time.

And the last one is - Our positions should reach out to the Youth of the Country through educational and social institutions we patronise in national programs like Swachh Bharat, direct bank transfers of benefits, women empowerment and more.

I thank the Honorable President for the opportunity to express my candid views.

Jai Hind.

My views were ominous as time revealed. A stitch in time saves nine. And I endured the nine.



CHAPTER 24

THE CM HAD TO BE OVERRULED



One fine day the Chief Minister ordered in writing to disband the WhatsApp group ‘Prosperous Puducherry’ created to provide the ‘GatiShakti’ to various departments. This technology tool facilitated sharing of real-time information, breaking silos. Precisely what the Honourable Prime Minister continues to do.

The CM’s order of dissolving the WhatsApp group was blatantly retrograde. It was to break internal communications, painstakingly nurtured. I saw no rationale for such a regressive order. Perhaps it suited him to keep departments divided.

Within minutes of the CM's order, many senior-most officers, led by the Chief Secretary, left the group as if they were waiting to see it abandoned. Undoubtedly, it came as a relief because performance exposure was anathema to them. Few left the group out of fear of annoying the HCM since he wrote their annual performance appraisal.

Still, others played safe but informed me directly that they were not comfortable leaving and disagreed with this order. The CM threatened some officers with departmental action if they did not leave the group immediately. They all knew very well that I was the architect and administrator of the group, cultivating and promoting increased sharing on WhatsApp to strengthen collaboration.

I experienced a hard-wired mentality. It did not surprise me. I was conscious of the discomfort many seniors had in computer-based mediated communication. It opened new ways to connect in a manner they were not oriented, forcing them to adapt to a new form of open broadcasting.

Some officers felt mortified due to shared pictures of filth, dumps, choked drains, extortion complaints, intriguing land grabs, encroachments by influentials, traffic bottlenecks, police behaviour, favouritism, and more. But then, 'is sunshine, not the biggest disinfectant?'

The CM ostensibly was afraid of the 'sunshine' on the deficiencies. He preferred to overlook the framework and guidelines for using social media by government organisations issued by the Department of Electronics and Information Technology, Ministry of Communication, Government of India.

One immediate impact of disbanding the group was a breakdown of internal coordination. No one then knew what was happening where. The main dump yard of Puducherry was engulfed with fire, destroying and choking the whole vicinity with poisonous gases, putting lives at risk. No one attended; I was on an official visit to Delhi. I saw it

reported in the news. The drying up of internal sharing ruptured the administration, making it harder to forge coordination and harmony. Every time it was two steps forward, three steps back.

We integrated our departments with many citizen's groups alongside. My persistence and trust in the righteousness of action brought back those who left. Willingness for coordination returned over a period.

Puducherry was far from Delhi for the Government of India to know that their own Union Territory was defying their policies. The establishment took advantage of this distance but for how long?

I overruled the CM's order and restored a status quo ante. We grew from strength to strength - group to group.

Over time, we became a vast network wired together to keep the communication going 24x7, unique in coordination. It broke down all hierarchies and united us as one. Team Raj Nivas and I remained an integral part of all such groups.

'Team Puducherry' now was a marvel and model of this technology of GatiShakti. It served us as a hotline during the year of Covid-19.



CHAPTER 25

DISASTROUS LEGACY



Departmental Presentations

Starting from the first week of taking charge, I sought department heads to present their work status with a SWOT analysis.

I wanted to know their Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats, along with their mission statement, to understand where we stood.

These presentations were like a white paper on the state of affairs I inherited. Every single department was problematic. It suffered from severe bankruptcy in the administration. I was left wondering where were the solutions. The only link with the inherited administration was the serving Chief Secretary. The earlier political establishment was all gone, having lost power, replaced by the newly elected executive, now in power.

The presentations laid bare utter callousness in the past administration.

After round one of all presentations and all departments covered, I wrote a summation of my observations to all New Ministers and Heads of Departments, hoping it would inspire them to make a difference.

Summation Note of My Observations

1. *There is a compelling need for policy formulation and SOPs of each respective department. It's an abysmal situation as of now, as was evident in yesterday's interaction with the Bangalore team who came to guide us, on our invitation, for the overall development of Puducherry. We could offer them nothing at all. It wasn't very comfortable.*
2. *There is a vast pendency in personnel matters, be it vacancies, formulation of service rules and more.*
3. *There is a compelling need for Inter and Intra coordination of various departments. Or else the work is seen to suffer, leading to severe grievances and wastage of all kinds.*
4. *While many departments faithfully identified their weaknesses during presentations, they had no declared strategies in place to deal with them.*
5. *There is a vast reservoir of human resources from academia, recognised professionals, NGOs, and more. But neither tapped nor integrated.*
6. *Upgradation of skills needs to be a constant endeavour. The Departments need to do a regular training needs analysis (TINA) and tap what is available close by to upskill.*

I have highlighted just a few observations right now, as these came to my mind. But there is just plenty to correct.

Thank you for making the presentations, which educated me to help think with you and drive the required changes expeditiously.

I shall be sending you my learnings from time to time. Would you please read the observations made and duly recorded (with you already) on your respective presentations for intelligent implementation?

The respective Honourable ministers will also be informed and invited for planned future reviews, as they display interest in their participation. It will pave the way for faster decision making and provide much-needed coordination-with Chief Secretary playing a pivotal role in the implementation.

*Best Wishes,
Kiran.*

*For information and necessary action,
Honourable CM and All Ministers, All Secretaries, DGP, and all Directors of all Departments.*

As revealed through the presentations, I did not mention the state of affairs in the monthly reports to the Honorable President of India. But it was evident that the bureaucracy and the political establishment had failed the people of Puducherry. While the people had voted the politicians out, they could not do anything with the bureaucracy. I inherited the same.

I heard NOTHING from the Honourable Ministers NOR the Chief Secretary.

I could not wait. I piloted the change.

The revealed bankruptcies in nearly all the departments were on various accounts.

1. No Water Policy

Despite the steeply falling water table, excessive extraction in water usage was from groundwater without any serious plans for replenishment.

Saline water was intruding into sweet water aquifers due to over-extraction puncturing the membranes. It could not wait.

2. No Industrial Policy

The absence of online services caused gross delays. Human interface encouraged corrupt practices as there was no ease of doing business. Regressive labour union activities were also holding up growth. Unless a time-bound action plan was in place, existing industries wanted to shift out.

3. Poor Solid Waste Management Practices

Tonnes of waste or garbage was dumped devoid of any treatment plans. It was without any community participation or community responsibility. No education or communication plans were in place.

People threw dead cows and pigs in the drains; even dumped sacks.

There was a lack of political and bureaucratic will and acceptance to support Swachhata Corporation cleaning the city. Hence wages to the Swachhata workers were delayed. Sanitation work was suffering.

4. No Desilt Plans

People were using gutters for garbage. Hence one downpour would flood the city. There were no desilt plans for city drains.

5. Municipal Services Crying for Attention

These were highly politically manipulated. Lack of leadership and its presence was being felt. The disaster management unit was not in shape, with neither supervision nor equipment. Staff stood diverted to work in the revenue department. No contingency funds were allocated when the UT was highly cyclone prone. No NGOs like the Red Cross, NSS, Civil Defence and others co-opted in disaster management.

6. Flood-Prone Residential Colonies

Colonies were in low lying areas and were persistently flooded. There was no firmed up engineering plan in sight.

7. No Roster for PWD Staff

Hundreds of multi-tasking staff of PWD had no roster to check how many were on their payrolls. It was heavily overstaffed. The team was diverted to serve the influential at the cost of the public money and city-maintained CE. Besides this, there were deficiencies in personnel policies and stranded recruitments in litigation.

8. Transport Department Lacked Basic Infrastructure

Such as automated vehicle testing facilities, road-testing track, or radar gun interceptors, with widespread ignorance of road safety. Transport services were also making losses due to excessive recruitment, lack of investments, finance and skilled technical staff.

9. No Tourism Policy, No Standard Operating Procedures, or Training

There was an absence of plans for water sports and water transportation opportunities.

Tourist exploitation by auto drivers' unions. Resistance to auto fares, Traffic cameras, cab services such as Uber and others.

10. Regions of the UT were Financially in Red

Their generation of revenue was half of the expenses. Hence they heavily depended on financial support from the Head Office.

The administration did not shut down 11 outdated textile mills despite several recommendations. Instead, staff remained on payrolls without work productivity. That was a significant drain on the public exchequer.

11. Cooperative Societies in Loss

There was an apparent conflict of interest with auditors as chairpersons. There were no elections, no audits, heavily politicised and packed with political nominees. They were only dependent on Government grants to keep a few jobs. Registrars were chairing these societies, who were supposed to be auditing them.

12. Prevailing Extortion and Rowdyism with vested political interests was the other urgent challenge - the culture of registering false FIRs to extort houses from the absentee Indian French senior citizens.

Other Departments

1. The State Cooperative Bank was on the verge of being declared bankrupt due to disproportionate NPA abuse for political favours.
2. Citizen charter was in neglect. There was a lack of essential awareness about the same in the departments.
3. Utter lack of coordination existed amongst the leadership in administrative functioning.
4. Despite having the best properties in the territory, the tourism industry was red due to overstaffing, massive leakages, and mismanagement.
5. Lack of air connectivity led to significant tourist traffic travelling by road and a severe shortage of parking space. There was no pay and ride schemes.
6. Puducherry Housing Board had no money to pay their staff and had half the strength.
7. Despite covering most of the population, the civil services and consumer department was cramped and unhealthy. It had far too many ineligible beneficiary cardholders, and there was no periodic review system.
8. There was a State Planning Board, which rarely met.
9. There was no vision document for the future.
10. Puducherry topped the country in reporting two-wheelers head injuries and fatalities. No one wore a helmet. So was its culture.
11. There was zero enforcement of the Puducherry Marine Fishing Regulation Act. The port department was absent from a regular dredging facility on the fisheries front. They were hindering fishing activities.
12. The port in Karaikal, a potential source of revenue, had been leased out, causing loss to the state exchequer. It was also entangled in litigation due to irregularities.
13. The Department of Ports was headless and without a master mariner since 1992.

14. The department of culture was more in the name. It had no proper premises, was headless, and could barely do justice to its presence.
15. Puducherry University did not integrate internships or community participation with an enormous youth presence.
16. Non-existent Vigilance department.
17. Lack of computerisation and digital maintenance for institutional memory.
18. Lack of accurate computerised personnel records in policing.
19. No media policy. No press briefings system.
20. People were not engaged in any way, except for transactional favours.

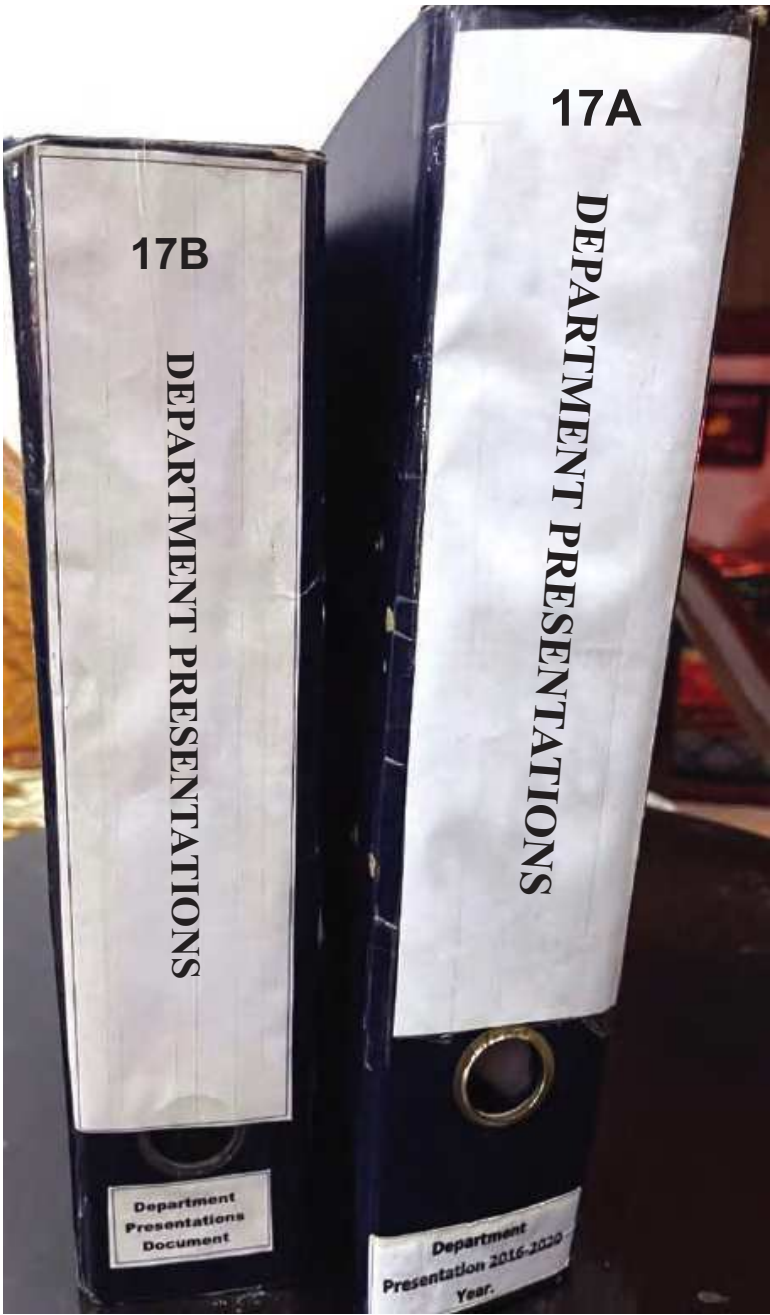
Monthly reports to Rashtrapati Bhavan did not record the magnitude of deficiencies I saw. That was my challenge. How I was going to deal with these was my responsibility. I knew that altering this legacy would mean an overhaul in our work and its quantum.

The administration was in utmost need of financial prudence as the debt was more than the annual budget. Hence it was a priority to save the UT from falling into a debt trap.

I could see where the problem was. I decided to deal with it accordingly, department wise, officer wise, every day, bit by bit, situationally.

Through presentations, the office of the Lt. Governor got a more precise insight and perspective of the existing situation then.





The Docket of Presentations, a Source of my Observations

Departmental Presentations



Departmental Presentations



CHAPTER 26

TOWNHALLS SHOWING THE MIRROR



Revenue, PWD, & Electricity Department

I gave the TEA mantra in my inaugural speech, which stood for Trust, Empowerment and Alignment.

I had also announced the Mission statement, 'Prosperous Puducherry'. Only the invited public officials came to Raj Nivas to hear me in person.

What about the real deliverers? The rank and file? Within departments and across the board? They were the actual public interface.

Should their awareness be limited to news, they may or may not read or hear it second hand?

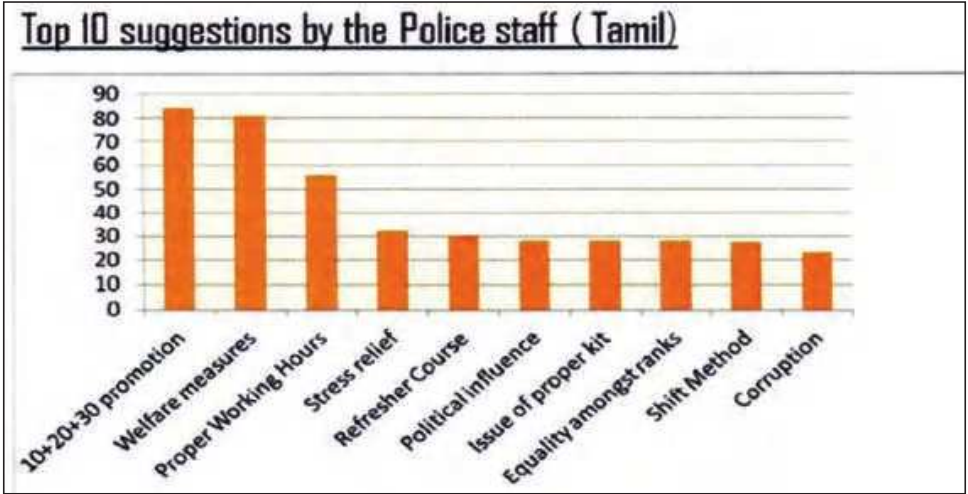
There is no substitute for direct communication and eye contact. The Townhall meetings were the fastest way forward.

I called for Townhalls very early on. We distributed a questionnaire to all attendees seeking suggestions. We carried out a dip test to

know what they had to say, thereby giving participants a voice, albeit anonymously.

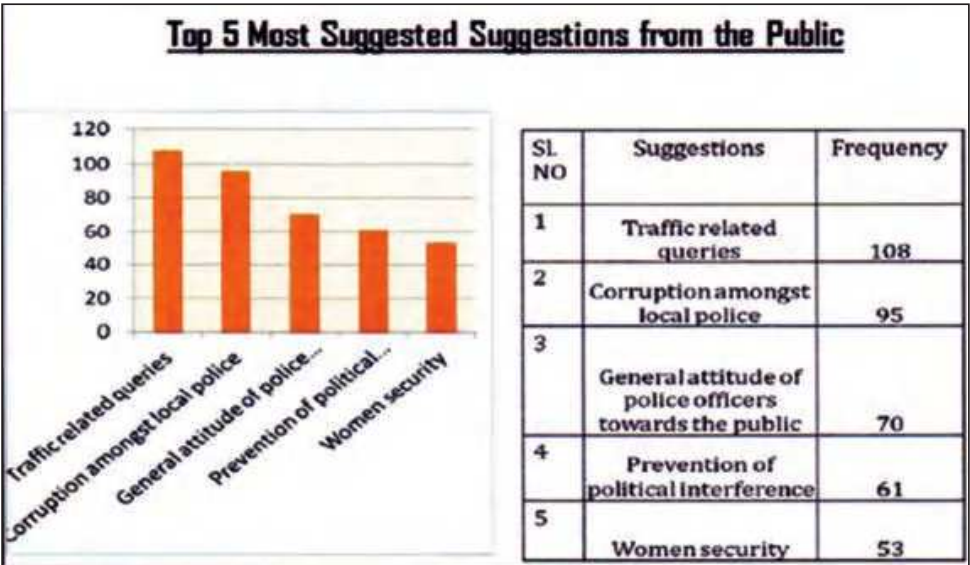
It worked.

Dip Test from the Police Personnel



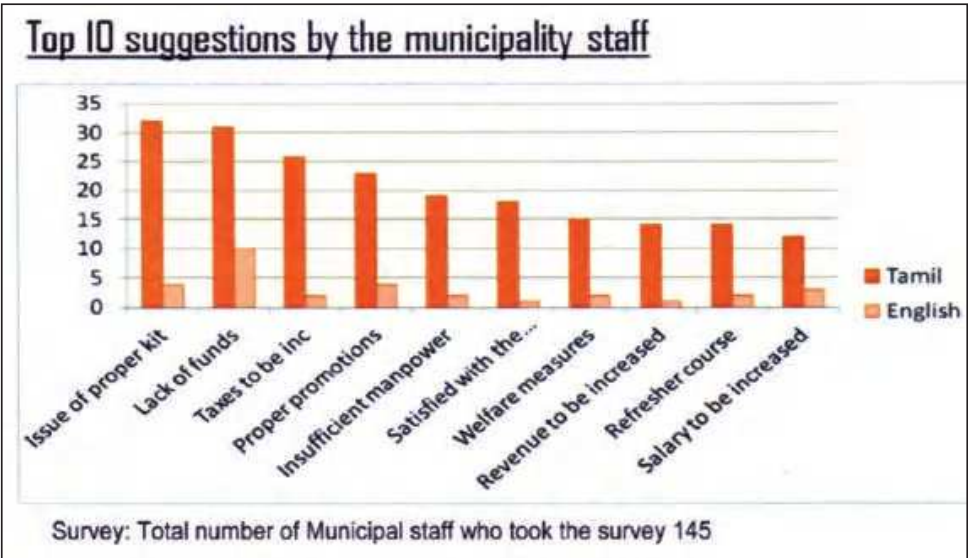
The top 3 needs, as stated by the police personnel, were promotions, welfare measures and proper working hours.

Dip Test from People



The top 3 suggestions from people were traffic issues, corruption and the general attitude of the Police.

Dip Test from the Municipal staff



The top 3 suggestions from the municipal staff were need for a proper kit, lack of funds, and increased taxes.

Townhalls were a deliberate effort to imbibe a sense of belonging and collective ownership amongst public officials with clarity of purpose on the expectation. Why must they be responsive and self-driven? How important was it to be collaborative given the interconnectedness in administration? How essential it was for them to see governance as an organic whole?

I sensitised them by showing slides on what was appearing in the newspapers, including people's views and other news reports. I got them to reflect on who was responsible for this negligence.

This direct messaging enabled fast-forwarding of an attitudinal change.

I endeavoured to bring together the departments to appreciate their individual and interconnected roles towards this goal. They had never heard leadership directly. These Townhalls raised inner consciousness to respond, be visible and feel accountable.

But there was a long way to go. Attitudes take time to change.

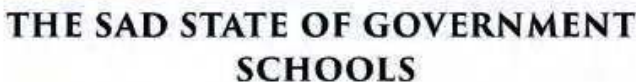
More so when the entrenched vested interests exist, keeping them insecure and in conflict.

This seeding helped drive the change, and many started to enjoy the feel of fresh air.

We began to make inroads.



CHAPTER 27



Some of our important choices have a time line. If we delay a decision, the opportunity is gone forever

-James E Faust, US politician

L-G exposes 'headless' govt school having no amenities

Values without asterisk correspond to 1000 trials, pre-defined time running 1000 vs.

[illegible][illegible]

Every grievance received has its own inherent urgency.

Response is an important choice the receiver makes. It can be mechanical or dynamic. This is what separates one recipient from the other. It's not about right or wrong. It's about whether something can wait or it should start the process of inquiry and change for the better. These decisions either come by experience or by training. When both are missing, Grievance increases.

-Kiran Bedi

facebook.com/thekiranbedi

 @thekiranbedi

 www.kiranbedi.com

 [instagram.com/Kiran.Bedi](https://www.instagram.com/Kiran.Bedi)

I received several petitions from the parents and students about the deplorable state of affairs of schools and colleges.

They urged me to visit these institutions. These complaints appeared severe and urgent. I called for the Director, Education to verify and examine these issues with me.

I first took up the petitions of schools, beginning with the primary rural co-ed school. The complaint was that the boys leave school soon after the mid-day meal and do not attend the rest of the classes.

Response of a Student to a Questionnaire

* I am 10th Standard Next Year
nursing

2. How will you like to be? who will be your?
* I am fast of 12th mark
am good mark

* into nursing
3. why to I ~~not~~ want to do?
Ans: * I want to do I want to nursing
my family is very poor family.

4) What do I want more?
* I like my family. my mom.
* I into nursing
* in very of a good school

write I am Finish
* M. Paveena

I saw a deplorable state of affairs. It was even worse than the complaint. Given the language barrier and the presence of supervisors, I needed a way to get the students to answer my questions directly.

I asked them to write their responses on a sheet of paper.

The questions asked were to state their class, what would they like to be when they grow up, what more would they want from their school or parents? These were the fundamental questions to understand the state of affairs.

The responses made me very uncomfortable and remorseful. I could see what was wrong and where? My challenge was, where do I begin? To what extent and with whom? And who all?

There are over 500 government schools in Puducherry where thousands of children belong to low-income parents, daily wagers, scooter drivers and construction workers.

Schooling was free with school bags, books, uniforms, shoes, accessible transport, breakfast, mid-day meal and even scholarships. Teachers were well paid, better than those in private schools. Yet, the result was disheartening.

Surveys reported that nearly 95% of fathers of these children spent their limited incomes on alcohol. The government was in no way dissuading them. It needed their sin money.

Many said, ‘doctors’, in response to my question on what they wanted to be when they grew up. But there was no career counselling nor preparators to see what could help them and guide them in their aspirations. Parents Teachers Associations were neither formed nor attended. Home visits by teachers were equally missing. Extra classes were also not held. I wondered how the students would pass their 12th standard board exam? There was no calendar of events to be observed, no annual functions, sports days, not even any chief guests invited as mentors. During my five years of tenure in Puducherry, I received many invitations from private schools for their annuals, but none from a government school.

Puducherry followed the Tamil Nadu Board but had no lessons on Puducherry history. The students had little clue of its past. Reportedly, even the teachers paid no attention to these issues.

I found no relevant program linking the dropouts with the appropriate skill development and vocational training institutes. The predominant attraction for their parents for continuing sending their children was food.

I compiled the feedback report of my observations and evaluation for the honourable Minister of Education, hoping it would worry him and work as a catalyst for reform.

I did not wait for my office staff to type it out; I sent a handwritten letter returning from the visit.

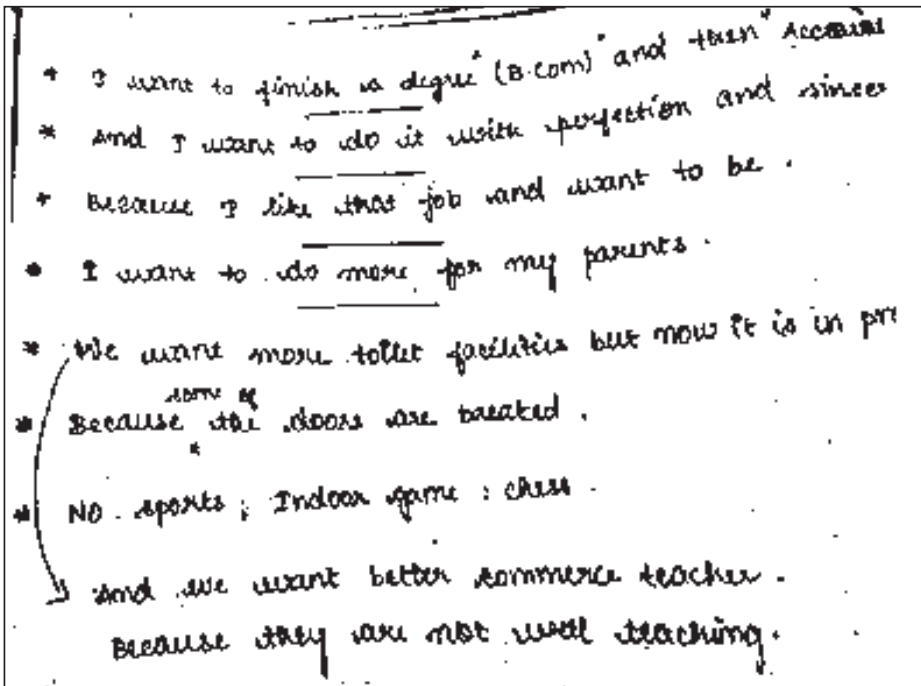
I continued my visits as petitions kept pouring in.

I went to an urban school on my subsequent visit. The 11th-grade students complained that their chemistry teacher had been missing for a while now. It was when they were just one year away from seeking college admissions.

I observed that we had literate but unskilled and unemployable youth. No wonder many of these young boys reportedly joined rowdy gangs when in need of money as hired by the political interests. Ironically, based on the survey responses, they preferred to join the police, teaching and engineering departments.

I also visited a girls' college and an all-girls school. The class told me that they did not have a commerce teacher for months. Again, I gave them a sheet of paper to write down the answers to my questions.

Response of a Student to a Questionnaire



I saw exceptionally self-driven teachers but without a long term, vision to secure students' lives in Government schools.

I kept the element of a surprise visit. And hence there was regularity in mid-day meals and an occasionally clean school.

I want to be chartered accountant.
 Because I like CA.
 I want good teacher is commerce because my teacher
 taught slowly means she did not ^{speak} taught loudly.
 Sports : yes (chus).



Visit to the Boys School

We involved a few NGOs interested in self-promotion in supporting schools with computers and sports equipment. Some schools started to show signs of improvement. The Minister began to visit once in a while. There was enhanced supervision, and several sensitisations meet with teachers. Department started to put its house in order. The complaints came down as things began to fall in place.

As this got into gear, I moved my attention to complaints from higher education.

The situation here was difficult as many institutions were headless for years. They were deputising teachers on low-cost contracts with no incentive for additional learning. Vacancies were not filled up for years, and there was a lack of close supervision, and the infrastructure was poorly maintained.

My visits in response to parents feedback and reports in newspapers tried to expose the system, to propel the change. But I noticed, it led to a mere patchwork of improvement within time constraints. It was not commensurate with the extent of investments made.

I wondered how Puducherry would do justice to its aspirational generations, wanting to be professionals, doctors, engineers, chartered accountants, and nurses without committed teachers and dutiful administration. They shall remain dependent on government doles and stay a vote bank for freebies.

The UT needed only one dynamic education minister with a committed Secretary of Education to transform the whole generation of students. That would have happened if they had visited schools and colleges daily to clean up the legacy and transform it. Once they ventured into the field, changes would visibly speed up. As then, their rank and file shall also be present. Could they then ensure parent teacher meetings and home visits to the absentees and take regular feedback themselves?

They could also link students with vocational skills in summer vacation classes, conduct extra language classes, and prepare them for NEET and other competitive examinations.

It is not that there were no exceptions that I saw. I visited successful ones too. But they were due to outstanding teachers who earned national awards on their merit and achieved it against the odds.

Similarly, transparency in all recruitments and personal policies should be free of extraneous influences to prevent litigation.

Senior supervision needed no extra budget. It only required passion with sustained determination. The status quo perhaps suited vested interests. But not the future of India.

Puducherry has youth ‘hungry to learn, needing care and hand-holding along with mental focus and nutrition’. They need leadership involvement, not only SOP’s.

Most of all, they need responsible fathers at home who are involved in their children’s education and do not outsource their future generation to the vagaries of political and administrative inertia and interests.



Scan QR for Photos, Videos & Others

CHAPTER 28

SURGICAL VISITS

“Don’t waste money on this”, says Lieutenant Governor Dr. Kiran Bedi during her visit to Social Welfare Department this morning. She removed the banner at once.

December 7, 2018 Puducherry



Town Hall meetings worked as teasers of what was likely to come. It only got the murmur going.

Public officials were wondering what it meant. The accessibility to Raj Nivas had raised accountability of administration. It further enhanced the responsibility to change the status quo.

By starting my responsibility with seeking departmental presentations, Raj Nivas had invited a challenge for itself. My office knew the realities. The SWOT had already revealed gross deficiencies. The onus was on my office; how will it drive the transformation from acceptance of 'What is?' to 'What ought to be?'.

The presentations, open house, on the rounds, grievances redressal systems were driving the compulsion, and awaiting exposure and transformation.

To do this, I kept up my visits to various offices by prior notice and surprise checks. It kept everyone on their toes. Yet many were taking chances hoping I would give up frustrated. I did not. On the contrary, the more I visited, the more I realised the need to keep up visits.

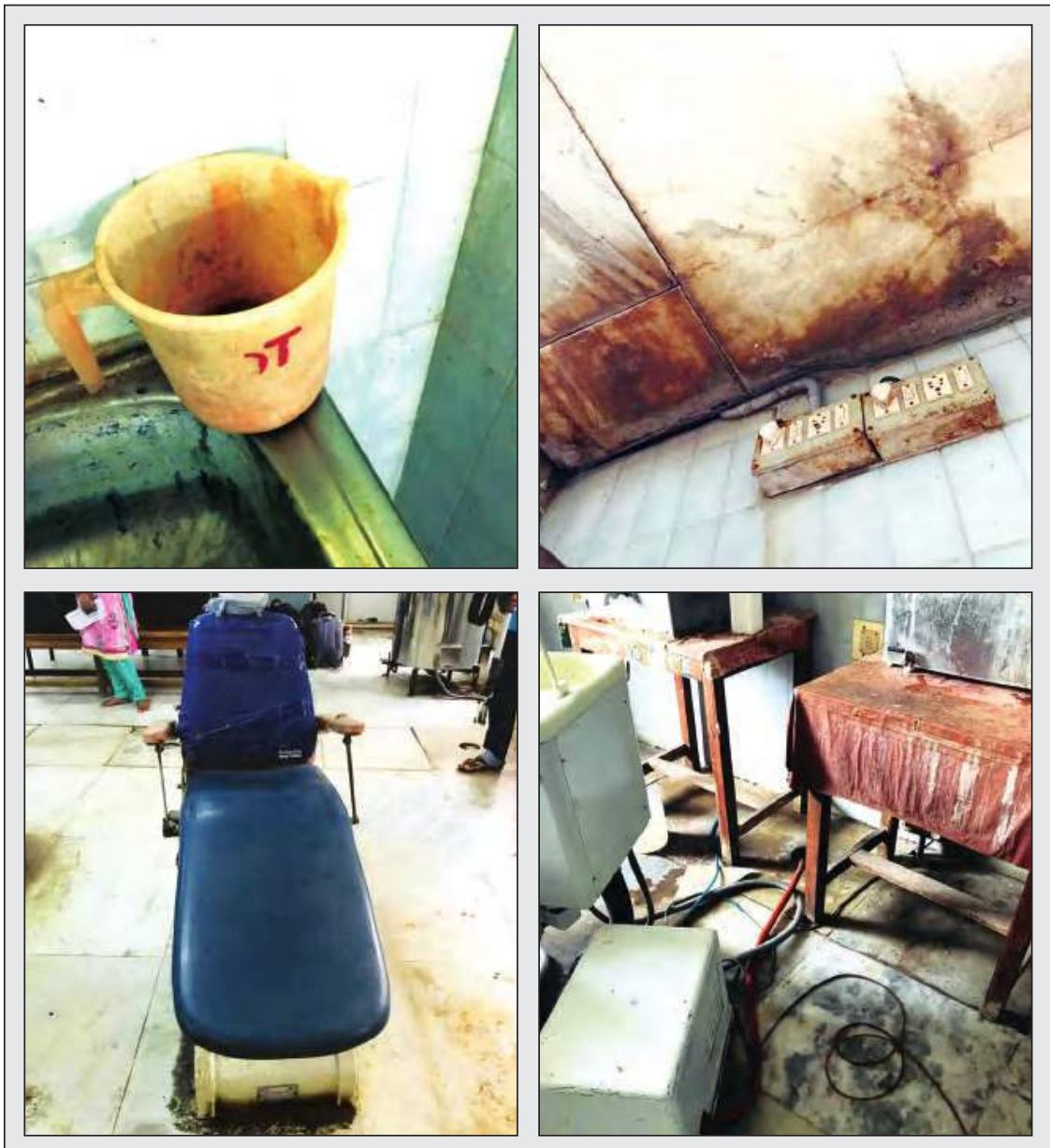
What I saw embarrassed some, but I did not see many regretting either. Many officers were hoping for the memory to be short.

I took photos of the scary scenes I came across. I felt relieved that I inspected because I saw a gross dereliction of duty.

I had been alerted by the students and staff members of the Dental College. I heard them but did not realise the gravity of the situation till I visited.

As I entered the college premises, to begin with, the compound was very ill-kept.

I went straight to the treatment ward.



I saw broken flooring, unused machinery, an ill-equipped lab, dirty washbasins, unhygienic instruments, broken machines and chairs.

Most of the dental chairs exposed the patients to a risk of injury-the OPD was dirty. Dental instruments were crooked. I was left wondering how could we treat any patients in such conditions.

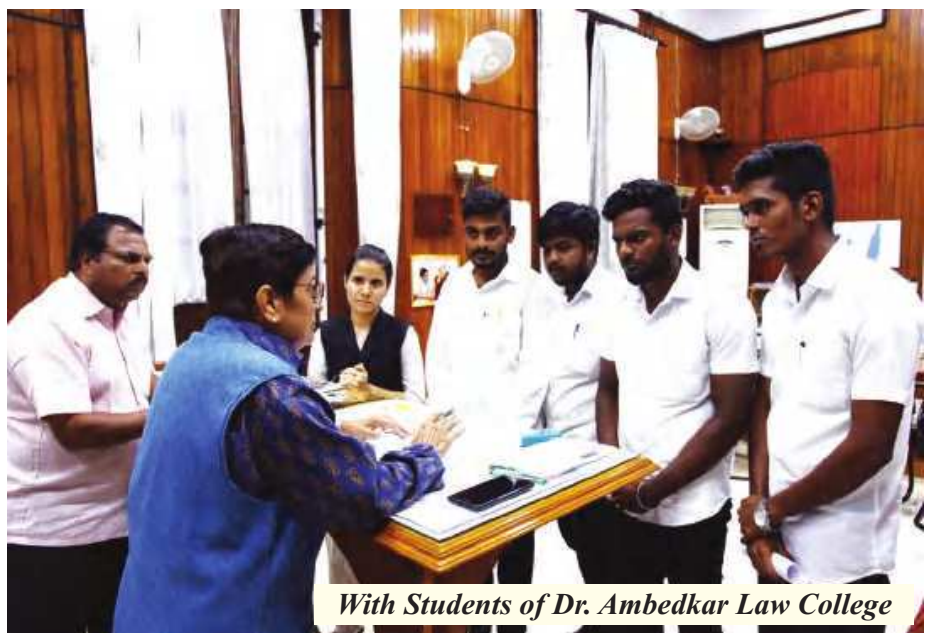
The Dean and the Director of Medical Services tried to make up the numbers. They apportioned blame on the Minister for procrastinating over the choice of the contractor.

I then went to the Dean's office. On examining the files, what the officers alleged stood confirmed. However, that did not absolve the Dean from providing practical training to the students.

The staff, too, had not been paid their salaries and students their stipends.

I informed the Dental Council of India to depute a team to audit the functioning. The Council came and reviewed and placed it back on track.

My visit to the Law College in Puducherry was another example of how the field visit helped identify the failure of a vital learning institution.



With Students of Dr. Ambedkar Law College

At the invitation of law students, who came to visit me in the Open House, I went to the Law college.

The premises were poorly maintained, and the student's canteen inaugurated with fanfare remained unutilised.

The college library was not open to undergraduate students, and only ten students were allowed out of 500. I questioned the librarian to seek

a valid reason for the same. The librarian told me that the students tore away the pages or even stole the books.

The premises looked like an unattended jungle. The classrooms were in the dark as there was no electricity. There were dogs on the premises. Students staying in the hostel lacked even the basic amenities. Less said, the better. No wonder they were always in agitation mode and feeling neglected.

No rules existed for the appointment of the Principal. Arrangements were adhoc. The students tried shutting the exit gates to stop me from going out till I heard their grievances. Some mischievous elements in the group had been causing strife* inside the college, due to which classes were irregular.



I held a review meeting subsequently and got a responsible officer appointed to oversee the administration.

*Scan QR for full News clips

Inspections continued!



Scan QR for Photos, Videos & Others

CHAPTER 29

PUNCTILIOUS POLICING



Police strength, on the surface, looked decent in numbers but not in systems.

Over the years, the governments of the day had neglected social and welfare matters. Corruption was high. Allegedly, some police personnel were involved in land grabbing, illegal sand mining, allowing encroachments, road safety violations, drugs, unauthorised lottery sales, flawed investigations, poor prosecution with lack of coordination leading to a high rate of acquittals.

They did not have a systematic police beat system on the ground, nor was there regularity in police station inspections. Personnel policies were arbitrary. Police station data management, information technology training and updating of laws were not serious priorities.

Due to high political interference, all postings and transfers were based on considerations rather than merit.

Nepotism was widespread in a small place like Puducherry. It was taking a heavy toll on the motivation of rank and file. The Inspectors and the Sub-Inspectors were awaiting promotions for a long time. They were a disgruntled lot.

Their promotion matters were under protracted litigation due to a lack of political decision making and internal wranglings. It suited vested interests to keep issues hanging. It made many on the waiting list vulnerable to pressures and obligations.

There were even false case registrations to deal with landlord-tenant and land ownership disputes.

The Vigilance department existed in name only with no tracking system of complaints. It had no anti-corruption wing.



The police station record systems were poorly maintained, with history sheets of known bad characters kept insecure and in loose sheets. However, this confidential record should be in safe keeping with the Police station in-charge and accessible only to him. The IT

systems provided by the Government of India schemes were used inadequately by the Incharge-Police Station.

Women police training was not wholesome. The deployment was not fulfilling the purpose of such huge investments. They were routinely relegated to limited crimes against women and children and not integrated into the beat system to work with the men for inclusive policing.

The department lacked any road safety traffic plan despite an annual celebration with a fanfare of the road safety week. No two-wheel driver wore a helmet despite the laws. Spot fining was not the rule. The department was not documenting traffic violators linked with their traffic licenses, as was the central rule. The city jewellers mainly sponsored the traffic signals, as indicated by the signage. The police budget made no provisions for them.

Seniors were not habitual of visiting the police stations and other police establishments to attend the roll calls or the briefings directly. There was an apparent disconnect between the headquarters and the field units.

Annual inspections by the gazetted officers were sporadic. IT systems on a directory of past criminals, rowdies, history sheeters on record were still not in place. Even usable gadgets in better policing were languishing in ill-kept and smelly stores.

The department diverted field staff to nonessential duties due to which ground policing was thin. There was no publicly announced schedule with the community, resident welfare associations, NGOs, or volunteers. There was no linkage with private security personnel. All security agencies worked in silos without exchanging information or having a combined training system.



The Police Department had no linkage with the Civil Defence force to aid local Police. Home Guards were an integral part of regular policing, and some were better than the recruited cops.

Welfare measures for the families were non-existent. Past welfare measures taken by predecessors were out of operations. I saw them shut down. They were mere memories. The community hall of the police training centre was full of cobwebs and out of use. There were no systematic WhatsApp groups to stay connected. Residents had no Directory. The premises had no calendar of activities - nothing for the residents, youth, women, and children, no playground, no day-care

centre for children, no skill development centres, neither a gymnasium nor a yoga centre accessible to them on the premises.

There was no WhatsApp group of SHOs one could connect with instantly, other than the option of the wireless system.

One by one, every single day, we tried grappling with all these issues and started to put these in place.

Police personnel also took a Self-Evaluation test to upskill themselves in law.

A blog on the inspection

Today the cops of police stations made an SOP for their beat system.

It shall lead to the overhauling of beat policing in Puducherry. Every police officer, man or woman shall have area responsibility and be an integral part of morning 8 am briefings and 5 pm debriefing roll call. Women will be thoroughly co-opted in grass-root field policing. And men too shall be part of family issues, where their role is valued.

The supervisory officers shall be present in morning roll calls and evening debriefs.

With the immediate implementation of the standard operating system of the beat police system, the UT shall have to be more closely served and collaborated with residents and the community. Overall, crime will fall, and criminal elements shall be on the run to be mended too.

- Kiran Bedi

Mentoring Note Post Visits**Mentoring Note Police Department**

For the departments to improve policing substantially, the secret are:

1. Daily GOs presence in the police station briefings.
2. Listening to the staff. Beat staff. What did they do? What do they know? What is the update?
3. On developments on all fronts. And what ought to be the plan for the day.
4. Then after hearing them, mentor. Guide them and support them. And strategise.
5. SSP Vigilance too can plan the time to be given to the police station on any vigilance matter. To hear directly. See directly, rather than only ask for written reports.
6. Share mutual learnings.
7. Records updation, usage, and digitisation will only improve after morning briefing review the status of cases under investigation.
8. Reports of Daily Diary entries. And grievances received.
9. This be the practice. ADG, SSP and GOS must.
10. Beat briefings need to hear the beat officers and check their area knowledge.
11. Also, WhatsApp groups be formed.

It demanded tremendous patience and persistence to drive the change in the face of resistance. It was a daily firefight. But I doggedly kept inching forward towards betterment.

Successive police leadership undoubtedly made improvements. They struggled to neutralise rowdies with intertwined deep-rooted nexuses.

Despite political interests and nullified extortions, the administration brought land-grabbing under the scanner. They formulated the beat system.

The cyber cell came into existence; morning briefings in police stations started intermittently. Whimsical closure and maintenance of history sheets got checked. Public access to Police Headquarters improved.

Crimes that did not come under control were sand thefts and traffic offences. The prosecution of the cases remained lethargic. Maintenance of the Police Station premises remained very unkempt due to the piling up of old case properties and condemned vehicles.

The mobility capacity of the police department stood crippled due to the administration's utter failure in replacing old vehicles with regular periodic condemnations. The supervisory staff was compelled to use personal vehicles to attend public calls while demanding them.

Puducherry police still do not have their own notified Police manual. It has been operating on the Tamil Nadu manual.

However, the Puducherry police contained, to an extent, illegal land grabbing, and did the most commendable work in Covid Management and the 'Nivar' cyclone. It was its leadership at its best.

One life is too short for addressing legacies of all kinds.

I have often been asked by the youth, "Madam, can we not teach respect for laws to those entrusted to enforce them?"

I told them, "Sure, we can! If you all grow up as responsible citizens before you become leaders."



CHAPTER 30

ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES SMASH HELMETS



Why should these elected representatives smash helmets on the ground and stomp on them? Despite knowing that their people suffer a very high rate of fatal accidents caused by not wearing helmets riding the two-wheeler, yet, these representatives do not allow the traffic police to enforce the mandated law.

Is public safety not their concern? It is one area where I was at perpetual odds with the political establishment from the very beginning of my tenure.

They caused the total failure of enforcement, fully aware that it was a blatant violation of all judicial directions of the Honourable Supreme Court Committee and Madras High Court, mandating wearing helmets while driving.

There were two contradicting directives to the Police; one was, follow the law in letter and spirit, the other was not to enforce but merely advocate. The politicians had their way.

But I did not give up. I kept putting the onus back on the Police to enforce the law, reminding them they are lawfully bound to implement it.

One of the immediate steps I took as soon as I took a review was to invite Rohit Baluja, President of the Institute of Road Traffic Education IRTE, to support the Puducherry Police in initiating capacity building in Road Safety Management.

They came at their own cost with their team of road safety engineers. The team conducted a video-based audit in Puducherry focusing on road traffic violations, traffic control devices, such as road signs, signals, road markings, standard codes of practice, the pattern of traffic enforcement, and black spot identification to assess overall road user behaviour.

Their preliminary report was embarrassing. Every road user made several violations within their journey, such as lane violations, over-speeding, wrongful parking, dangerous overtaking, and mobile phone usage while driving. Almost none of the motorcycle riders wore helmets.

Surveys revealed that traffic signals were faulty.

More than two-thirds of road signs and road markings did not correspond to the codes of practice.

Much of indisciplined behaviour accounts for faulty or non-structured traffic engineering, non-structured traffic enforcement, undefined roles and responsibilities in traffic management, and a total lack of political will.

They conducted training programs for police officers, engineers of road organisations, schoolteachers, motor licensing officers and interceptors.

While we made the public aware, the IRTE set up a small Traffic Management Centre for data management, conducted road safety audits to improve road geometrics and standard installation of traffic control devices. Police officers started taking responsibility by crafting need-based traffic control measures. The road accident fatalities witnessed a sharp reduction.

This achievement took place without any meaningful support from the political system. Puducherry would have witnessed a significant fall in fatal accidents, and considerably improved traffic management provided the elected representatives supported it.

The IRTE engineers also demonstrated traffic engineering amendments to two intersections that were black spots and required the presence of at least three police officers daily.

These were low-cost measures with amendments to medians, compulsory turns, road signs and improving traffic signal operations. We negated accidents, and police presence was also not required throughout the day. Each intersection saw a reduction of at least four fatalities annually. This scientific application of need-based traffic engineering measures enthused the police officers, who took it upon themselves to improve other junctions and road stretches.

Extreme negativity and ambivalence in wearing helmets for safety prevailed for reasons unexplained. It kept taking us back to the significant number of reported fatal accidents caused by not wearing a helmet. It impacted the progress made on the ground with the help of experts.

Blog of the day

This morning, I was compelled to take the road incognito to see traffic regulation. And found traffic regulation management wanting. Saw serious flaws in traffic regulation. The traffic police deployment was missing for most of ECR.

Wherever detected, they were not doing their duty correctly. The cops did not locate themselves strategically. I saw no senior officer patrolling or on the move. I saw traffic signals dim and un-clean, also not positioned well for visibility. Advertisements crowded them out or the tree branches.



One had to search for the signal in the crowd of advertisements. Some road cuts were right near the signs and had no warning signals.

Officers have been summoned to RajNivas for a recorded warning today. My patrolling in a private car shall continue to keep the surprise checking ongoing. The public is also requested to record and report on 1031 Or 100.



Or come to Open House Mon to Wed 5:00 pm. Without an appointment.

I served all a warning. All rewards and punishments shall go hand in hand. Nothing shall be lopsided.

I recall a harrowing narration received by email from a Tamil-French Indian after returning to France from a holiday in Puducherry with his family.

His email summed up the slackness of the traffic measures in Puducherry and how different departments responded to his injured sister. She eventually died due to sheer negligence as a result of poor road safety measures and delayed medical treatment.

An account of email as received

“I wish to inform you about the carelessness and worst services all your concerned departments gave us. My sister fell off the scooter because I could not see a speed breaker as it was dark with no streetlight.

Injured, I rushed her to a nearby clinic while she bled on the head.

*Since the private clinic did not have a scanning machine, they asked me to take her to JIPMER. When I asked for an ambulance, they told me that the hospital did not have a driver.**

Speed breakers were of serious concern as they were not technically approved from an engineering and road safety angle, nor were they visible from a distance in areas that were dim-lit with no or fewer street lights. With such a ground situation and without helmets, the riders would lose balance and fall off.

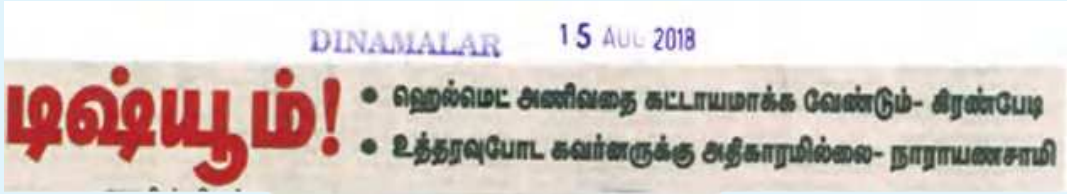
So instead of smashing helmets, I did not see any of these people’s representatives working on ensuring speed breakers’ correctness or promoting road safety measures.

The Political establishment harassed Police officers if they carried out lawful orders from the LG’s office.



CHAPTER 31

NOT SPARED- CARTOONED!



Our work kept the artists of Puducherry busy. I WAS CARTOONED! It was also employment generating. It engaged the media and left people chattering.

It provided running entertainment.





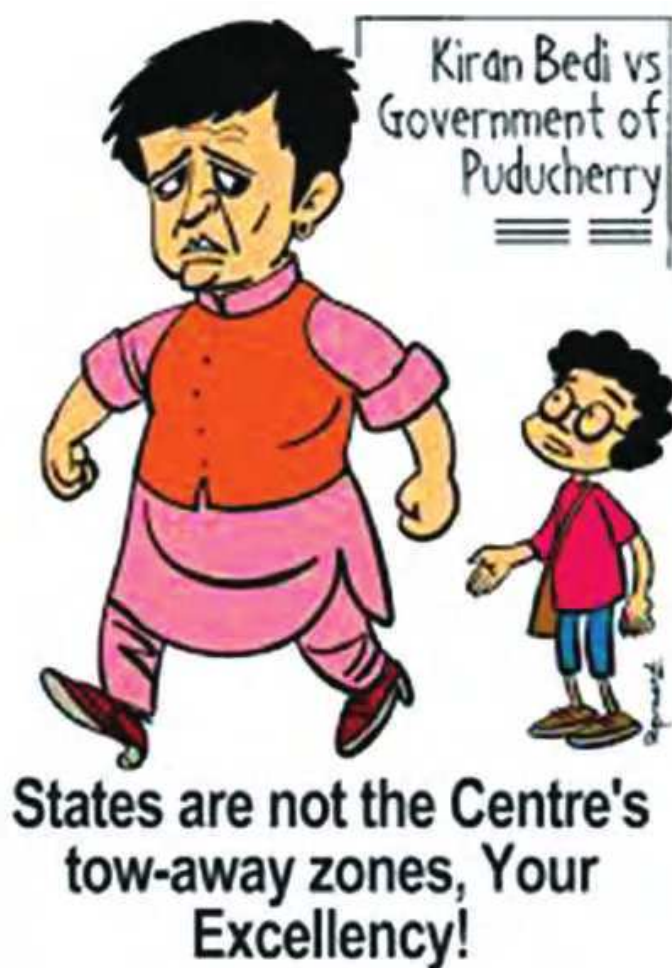
The new INDIAN EXPRESS

11 APR 2017

Congress takes to Twitter to counter Bedi's 'upper hand'

Party members share cartoons questioning L-G's claims; tweets counter questions





THE TIMES OF INDIA

22 JUL 2017

Bedi, CM supporters launch poster war







🔥 Cartoon:
Chief Minister accuses Lt. Governor of committing financial irregularity -

Chief Minister: You have to occupy the LG post & enjoy the sophisticated life till the end of the tenure. Otherwise, if you start going out for cleaning Puducherry and all... we will do nasty things like this only... Be careful ! 🔥

12:09 PM





Looking at these cartoons, it was evident that the political establishment was going through inner turmoil and feeling trapped and helpless because of purposeful services.

For the Team Raj Nivas, cartoons were a ringside view.



CHAPTER 32

THE BIG ASK

I responded to a barrage of negative political statements appearing in the newspapers through an open letter for the benefit of people at large.

I took up a step-by-step examination of issues in response to various publicly traded allegations in the media.

I categorically asked people what was wrong in administering rightly and adequately.

Step One. We (the Lt. Gov office) hold a daily 10:00 am review of the day, past and the present. Key officers of Raj Nivas attend it. On a need basis, we co-opt Puducherry-Karaikal, Mahe, and Yanam regions by video conference because they are long-distance away. Also, invite an expert to understand the matter under consideration on a need basis. We also review all the news reports of the day and use the social network to share public concerns for correction according to their urgency - for instance, a civic issue, health hazard, or investigative report of a reported mess up.

We also review all inputs from our grievance redressal forums, like websites, WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook accounts, postal mails, and emails. We choose to deal with it on a case-to-case basis. We minute the meeting and share it widely with all departments concerned.

I ask you - Is there anything wrong?

Step Two. After the 10:00 am meeting, we have a one-on-one meeting with the secretary or HOD who has something to discuss, or we need to hear him out. It helps resolve the matter and enables the LG office to take a more informed decision.

I ask you - Is there anything wrong?

Step Three. After this, we work on all files which have arrived and clear them with a positive approach. We ensure that these are following financial and administrative rules - we approve files that are in order and record reasons for those that are not. Or call for the officer to come and clarify. We do not hold back any files and do not delay. Anyone making allegations of uncertainty or bias, the onus is on them to make any file public. I ask you, do not just allege; please show.

I ask you - Is there anything wrong?

Step Four. From 4:00 pm onwards, the appointments begin. People who ask for a personal meeting are given time. Some come with invitation requests, others with an idea and some for problem-solving. We decide on a case-to-case basis.

I ask you - Is there anything wrong?

Step Five. From 5:00 pm, the LG office is an Open House. Any person who has a grievance can come; we hear all. We deal with each case as per the needs.

We are assisted by paralegals, a family counsellor, a police officer, and our grievance redressal officer. Raj Nivas does not work as a post office but as a problem solver to the possible solutions.

I ask you - Is there anything wrong?

Step Six. In all the above steps, what is the reason for being distracted?

What is the LG office doing, which is not strictly public and annoying? Let us understand the what, when and the why's. What kind of files come to the Lt. Governor's office. Files concerning transfers, positions, promotions, rules of appointments, the extension of posts, creation of posts, disciplinary matters, approvals on security and law and order issues, project proposals of above 10 Crores, policy approvals, cabinet decisions, approvals of contract and memorandum of understanding.

Why are these files coming? Because they need the Lt. Governor's approval as per the business rules and the UT Act mandate. Are the files dealt with after due examination, or are they just endorsements?

When files are examined adequately, queries may arise, amendments are proposed, discussions called for, honouring the differences of opinion. Most of the files are cleared. It is the very few who need more information.

The law and rules clearly say that the last word is of the LG's. So, what does one do with this? Accept it or dispute it?

In several files, the Honourable Chief Minister has been writing in his handwriting asking officers not to meet the LG, 'LG's don't interfere' and, even worse, statements not worth mentioning.

The standard response from my office has been to read the rules thoroughly. While the CM and his Cabinet must have the power to function, it does not preclude the powers and responsibilities of the LG. Please accept and respect it - we do not have a choice in the current scheme of things.

Continuing to dispute, it is only dissipating energy. Instead, why not put it in working for the people.

The Ministry of Home Affairs clarified the role and responsibilities of elected representatives and the Lt. Governor more than once. But then whose fault is it if it is dismissed as mere interpretation.

It means energy remains scattered and distracted, impacting the administration, as done in Puducherry.

Why not the elected representatives? Surely why not. But then, had they been there effectively with or without senior public officials, these grievances would not have been there forever - Also, what does an LG do if the elected representatives invited each time to join in do not participate? Does one continue to wait or move on to work?

I ask you - Is there anything wrong?

Step Seven. Every LG has freedom of movement in their region. But, it appears it's okay for some concerning interests if the administrator prefers going to the filthy drains and choked ponds to see issues and meet the people rather than visit places of tourist interests with friends and relatives.

What does an LG do if someone does not come along despite being invited? Keep waiting or move on?

What does the administrator do if the senior-most bureaucrat also declines field visits by saying, "Madam, isn't it too late to change? This service is not to be visible."

What is the LG saying that is causing you to cartoon the administrator? 'Do your duty, consider work as worship, be careful with public money, be fair, just and prompt. Be courageous and forthright. And if you cheat, you must be punished - be hardworking - go to the field, listen to people's problems, solve them comprehensively, be accessible, respect the rules, follow the law, remain self-driven, stay conscientious towards your responsibilities; also, remain sensitive. Advise your elected representatives correctly, verbally and on file, be responsible!

If we work together, we can make Puducherry the best UT within a few months...People want it this way too. So, where is the conflict?

What is wrong with responsive and sincere administration?

That is my Big Ask.

November 18, 2017



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IV

Officialdom

CHAPTER 33

MEDICAL MAFIA



The Aegean stables of the medical mafia was a hydra-headed giant in organised crime.

The tiny Union Territory had 7 medical colleges and 4 deemed universities for a small population. Some of them had a murky history.

These were reportedly instituted, owned and managed by deceptive and opaque ‘TRUSTS’ with an assured seat transacted in cash or patronage.

Un-deserving and the connected received patronage seats, while the deserving and not connected paid a substantial financial cost. It was almost blood money.

Daily Open House at Raj Nivas provided access to the unconnected commoner demanding seats as India’s medical education policies changed.

It all started when a deputation of parents and students came to the Open House with a written representation against several malpractices by private medical colleges and the CENTAC - Centralised Admissions Committee. They said they had come to Raj Nivas as a last resort. I knew the issue had a very entangled and polluted past, for there may not be any immediate solutions.

I heard them. I asked myself what I would expect from an LG if I were in that situation? The answer came, “I will stop any injustice however gigantic”. I told them I would do my best. I knew this meant taking

on a powerful mafia indulging in organised crime, which I needed to decode. I required primary evidence, but who would provide that? Perhaps none. All were afraid!

On 30th May 2017, when I walked up to the CENTAC (Central Admission Committee) office, I did not know I would get what I needed, as I stepped into bitter combat against the collective might of the private medical colleges in Puducherry, backed by the political establishment.

They were a congregation of 7 Medical Colleges, 4 Deemed Universities.

I saw a hall full of parents anxiously waiting and officials unwilling to answer their queries. I detected deceitful motives with evidence in the counselling process. I discovered that the officials on duty had arbitrarily transferred many government seats to the private universities. It was apparent that the sole criterion for converting these seats into management chunks was the exorbitant fees they could extort.

This went viral on YouTube. *People were recording the incident.

A prima facie fraud committed with departmental irregularities resulted in wrongful loss and suspected criminal intent. I referred the matter to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to conduct a preliminary inquiry and immediately come to collect evidence. It was volcanic for Puducherry.

The medical mafia stood naked.

The CBI registered a First Information Report (FIR) and named six senior bureaucrats in the Puducherry Administration.

It revived hope in many surrendered sections of society. But it became a turning point in the relationships between the political interests and the Lt. Governor office. I was now their enemy to be neutralised.

I continued to urge the colleges not to deny admission to deserving students on the grounds of a fee dispute which could be redressed or mediated later through courts.

But the mafia-establishments were in no mood to relent and forgo their age-old habits of extortion and amassing ill-gotten wealth. For them, it was a high-end financial business despite being registered as 'Trusts'.

The parents and the students made the following allegations against the private medical institutions:

1. Self-financing medical colleges/ institutions denied admission even after paying the fee fixed by the statutory fee committee (Rs. 5.5 lakh and Rs. 14 lakh for State quota and Management quota seats, respectively).
2. Deemed Universities refused to accept the fee paid and demanded exorbitant fees to the tune of Rs. 40 to 50 lakh per year, as the statutory fee committee has not fixed the cost.
3. Colleges forced the candidates to sign an undertaking to serve the institute for a period ranging from 3 to 5 years under an ill legal service bond.
4. Original certificates were retained by managements even after the admission process, though CENTAC has already done verification of credentials.
5. The management informed students of no stipend.

An excerpt from a Feedback of an aspiring student (Identity Protected)

I. CENTAC Issues

- 1) I COUNSELLING WAS CONDUCTED/BOANN EVEN BEFORE THE FEE STRUCTURE FOR GOVT. QUOTA WAS FIXED.
- 2) COUNSELLING WAS SCHEDULED ON 05.05.2017. BUT IT WAS NOT CONDUCTED. WHY IT WAS NOT CONDUCTED WAS NOT EXPLAINED.

II. Issues at College

- 1) College say that I haven't pay the fees - BUT I HAVE PAID 5.5 lakhs fee
 - 2) They Demand a 1 year service obligation
- AS A GOVT. SERVANT, I cannot take up employment from Private management

III. Suggestion

The PIMS management can accept my admission by exempting me from SERVICE OBLIGATION IN THEIR INSTITUTION in M.S. GENERAL LURGEY course

Respected Sir,
Madam,
I have filed a
M.P. 12347/2017 in
Honble MUMBAI HIGH COURT
in this regard

[Signature]
SIGNATURE OF STUDENT

*The feedback was alarming, and the private medical colleges were desperate. They were afraid of nothing.

Courts of law now seemed to be the only resort for the students. But who pays the legal fees? It was beyond the capacity of the parents and the student community. We were in search of a lawyer who could work pro bono.

During our interaction, a medical student, a victim of this nexus, recommended VBR Menon, a PIL lawyer. I made a personal call to check if he would take up a worthy cause pro bono. He agreed. There was no looking back after that.

The PIL sought the government's response of the day. They were in a fix. While the department's views were at variance with the office of

*Scan QR for full Feedback Form

the Lt. Governor, my Secretary, Theva Neethi Dhas, filed a separate affidavit before the Honourable Madras High Court. We had to hire an independent legal defence in support of the cause of the students.

In his affidavit, the following facts were placed before the Honorable Court.

1. The Deemed Universities were demanding exorbitant fees, i.e. Rs.40 to Rs.50 lakh per year and allegedly in cash for other payment components without authenticated receipts.
2. The fee notified on the website of Deemed Universities was arbitrarily increased between the first and second dates of standard counselling.
3. Students selected by Common Counselling and unable to pay the exorbitant fee were denied admission by deemed university institutions irrespective of NEET merit, reservation under OBC / SC.
4. The Deemed Universities filled up the seats on their own violating Supreme Court Judgments and MCI regulations.
5. The selected students under State Quota to both Deemed University Colleges and Affiliated Private Colleges as amended Clause 9A of PG Medical Education Regulation were notified on 10/3/2017.
6. Reservation for SC/OBC was provided by the Government of Puducherry in the seat matrix considering the number of seats in both Affiliated Private Colleges and Deemed University Colleges.
7. Admission to both Private Colleges and Deemed University under State Quota was made through a single portal with no distinction whatsoever.

8. The fee of students admitted in affiliated private Medical colleges was regulated as per orders of the Fee Committee, which had a fixed differential fee of Rs. 5.5 lakhs for State quota Students and Rs.14 lakhs for Management quota students.
9. Students admitted under Government quota in affiliated Colleges enjoyed the benefit of regulation of fee. However, the other Government quota students admitted to Deemed Universities, including students of social & Economically weaker sections (EWS), were denied the benefit of fee regulations.
10. Students selected under Government Quota as part of standard counselling stood classified as a joint entity entitled for equal protection irrespective of their admission into affiliated Private College or Deemed University. But they were not granted equal protection in terms of fees payable by them.
11. The meritorious students selected under State Quota to Deemed University institutions lost their seats for their inability to pay the exorbitant fee of Rs. 40 to Rs. 50 lakhs charged by these Institutions.
12. Because of the above and to protect the interest of deserving and socially and economically backward students, we took the personal initiative and addressed our concern to UGC, Health Ministry and Human Resource Ministry of Government of India.
13. Hon'ble Lt. Governor viewed that the fee charged by Deemed Universities needed to be regulated.

All along, the CM kept writing to me, not to interfere.

Thanks to the extensive research done by Mr. Menon, PIL Lawyer, and with the support of Assistant Solicitor General of India, Mr. Srinivasan, we were able to place our case in the proper perspective before Hon'ble High Court Chief Justice, Ms. Indira Banerjee.

An Extract of the Judgement

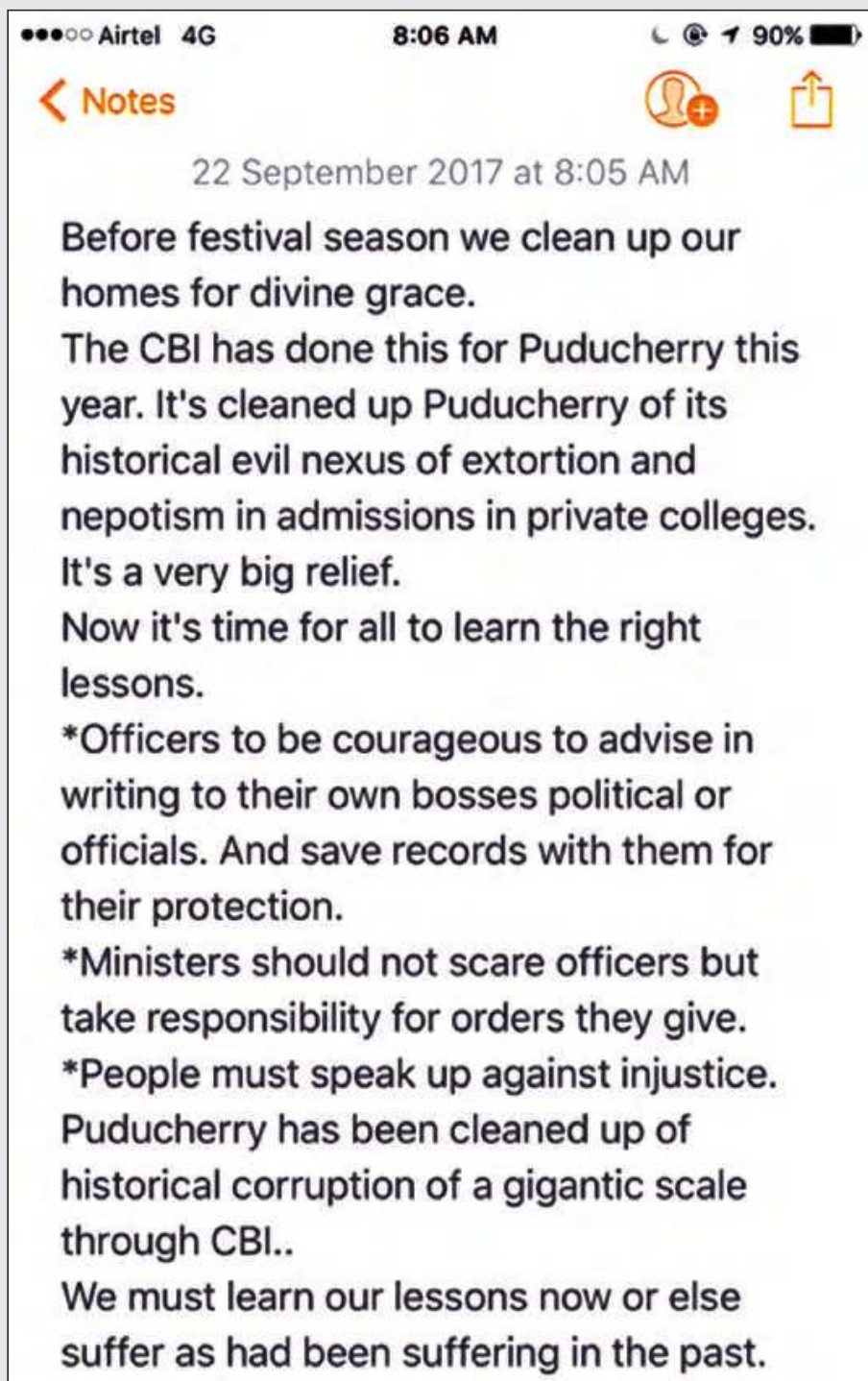
Para 22. *“We, therefore, deem it appropriate to pass an interim order directing the deemed Universities to admit the students provisionally selected and thriving in the admission tests/ counselling to the vacant seats in order of their merit, subject to the condition that each student shall deposit Rs. 10 lakhs at the time of admission towards the annual fee.*

Para 23. *We are informed that some non-clinical courses in the deemed universities for which the fees vary between Rs. 3 to 4 Lakhs. In such a case, the students will pay the fees charged and not Rs. 10 Lakhs.*

Para 24. *Considering that the future of the admitted students who are according to this interim order remains uncertain, there is an immense urgency. We expect that the University Grants Commission (Seventh Resource Development, including after that the respondent and Ministry of Humans -sixth respondent) shall forthwith constitute a Committee to regulate the fees chargeable by the self-financed deemed Universities.*

We were also fully supported by the Medical Council of India and the Government of India. It enabled other states and UTs to regulate the fee in more than 50 deemed university medical colleges.

The vested interests who stood to lose substantially now looked at all other means to get at the Lt. Governor's office.

My Blog of that time

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CHAPTER 34

APPOINTMENT OF THREE MLAs



Performing Duty as per UT Act

Swore in 3 MLAs, Puducherry, to the legislative assembly, as nominated by Central Govt. For those seeking more information on Legal Provisions on Appointment of 3 MLAs to Legislative Assembly in Puducherry.

According to the Union Territories Act, the nomination of 3 MLAs to the Puducherry Legislative Assembly is to be done by Central Government.

(it only says this, nothing more).

Ministry of Home Affairs sends the names to the Puducherry government. (Who then notify it. As was done in their case) The oath is/can be administered by the administrator.

(As was done in their case.)

Hence the nomination and the oath is/was laid down under the UT Act.

(May kindly read if you wish, or I have explained the legal position as per the Law.)

Kiran Bedi

July 5, 2017

The Government of Puducherry received the names of three candidates and directed the Chief Secretary to proceed and notify them as nominated Members of the Legislative Assembly.

However, the political establishment, including the Chief Secretary, expressed the inability in notifying and administer the oath as per legal requirements.

The Nominated MLAs came to Raj Nivas and complained that there was still no notification of their nomination as directed by the Government of India. They told me that the Speaker was making excuses in complying with the Government of India orders. They further added that the Chief Secretary was also expressing his helplessness. The three MLA's felt they were at the 'dead end'.

I told all three to give this to me in writing. I requested the OSD instruct Vijayan, the Raj Nivas videographer, to record their statements since it was a sensitive, legal and constitutional matter.

I also received a call from the Government of India asking me to complete the due process and exercise my responsibility as the administrator.

My OSD closely examined the legal provisions governing such an appointment. We were satisfied that we could break the legal log jam.

Meanwhile, opposing political grouping was heating up on the streets. There was a plan to call for a shutdown, causing widespread disturbance of law and order to pressure the Government of India to withdraw the nomination.

I asked the three nominated MLAs if they were willing to take the oath I administered since there is an explicit legal provision to do so, but it probably had never been exercised in the past.

It was already 7:00 pm. With the video recording completed, I asked the nominated MLAs if they had any auspicious hour in their mind to take the oath.

They said 8:00 pm would be 'OK' for them. I told nominees that the procedure could be completed this evening, provided they were

willing to take it without any bonhomie or ceremonial trappings. They prepared themselves.

My Secretary Theva Neethi Dhas and Additional Secretary Mr. Srinivas prepared the oath-taking papers and the lines to read. I administered the oath at the Raj Nivas itself from across my formal table. Our in-house Public Relations team video recorded and photographed the event. Our PRO, Mr. Kumaran, released the video clip and the photograph to the waiting media outside Raj Nivas.

All hell broke loose the following morning. The Cabinet members got miffed at this decisive action because the cause of the shutdown got diffused. We informed the Government of India about the completion of the legal process.

The story didn't end here. The political government continued hostility towards the nominated MLA's by denying them an identity card, allowances and wages, entry into the legislative assembly, right to participate and more. The three MLAs sat on dharna outside the Legislative Assembly, seeking their rights.

The political establishment took the matters to Court. Post that, a legal see-saw began with the Hon'ble Madras High Court. After five months of hearing all sides, including the Government of India, the Court ruled.

'Prima facie, it appears that the Speaker has no power to decide whether nomination stated to be made by the Central Government is valid or invalid.'

Hence, the decision of the Government of India nominating the three MLAs was upheld.

Despite the interim directions of the High Court, the Chief Minister restrained the Director of Accounts and Treasuries from paying salaries to the three nominated MLAs.

By March 2018, the Hon'ble Madras High Court set aside Speaker's Order and held the Nomination of three MLAs to the Puducherry Legislative Assembly as valid and directed that they take the seat in the Legislative Assembly forthwith.

Hon'ble Chief Justice of Madras High Court, Ms Indira Banerjee, now a Judge of the Supreme Court of India, in her judgement on page 52 stated - ***“Unlike the President of India or the Governor of a State, the Administrator of a Union Territory has powers to act independently, irrespective of the advice given by the Council of Ministers headed by the Chief Minister.”***

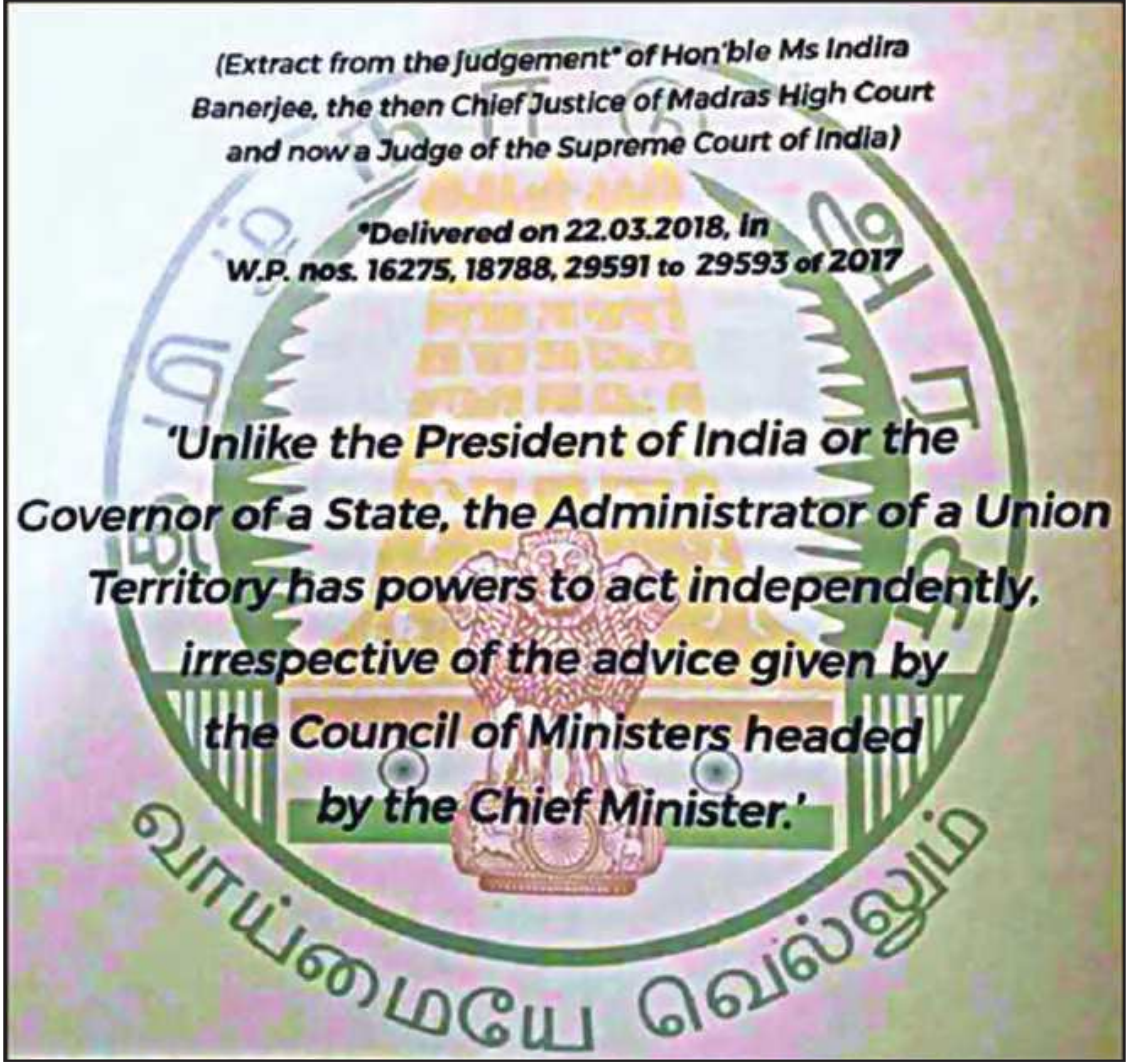
The Speaker continued to find fault and did not permit the three in the assembly. The MLAs went on a contempt petition, where the Court advised the petitioners to obtain interim orders of the Hon'ble Supreme Court.

The rule of law ultimately prevailed.



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**THE FINAL WORD
DELIVERED ON 22. 03. 2018, IN
W. P. NOS. 16275, 18788, 29593 OF 2017**



CHAPTER 35

AN ADVERSARIAL CHIEF SECRETARY

It was a challenge working with this Chief Secretary, who was there before my joining. Within weeks of my joining, I emailed him, noticing that he was neither welcoming nor supporting any changes.

I sent my first email to him.

My Dear.....,

I am constrained to express my concern on your not joining in the weekend joint Swachh/Sanitation rounds to do on-the-ground stock-taking to resolve old sanitation issues, some with severe implications, despite my repeated personal request to you.

Today was on drains inspection to check a repeat of last years' flood disaster. I am informed it was highly distressing in several colonies. Today's visit and collective brainstorming on the ground, with residents, threw up very creative and practical options to minimise the damage this year. (Hopefully.)

Residents of several areas have been consistently complaining, in many cases led by elected representatives. They are terrified of last year's repeat.

The ground realities have differed from those projected-on paper or discussed in offices.

Seeing is believing.

Hence, there is a compelling need to do field inspections for comprehensive and collaborative responses.

Prevention is cheaper than response or mitigation.

We have had Honourable Speaker and other concerned Ministers and MLAs join in the morning rounds and even today.

Your presence can hasten many processes, and you, too, could contribute your experience.

*With best wishes.
Kiran Bedi*

August, 2016

When I started to work with this officer, I noticed that he was uncomfortable with the transparency and team-building spirit I was trying to bring about.

Attitudinally he seemed very comfortable with a rigid hierarchical way of functioning with departments working in silos. There was no deployment or use of collaborative technology even when it was available. The websites were dull and outdated. For some departments, they did not exist.

He had been in office for more than a year. He worked with my predecessor, administrator Andamans, with Puducherry as an additional charge. Perhaps he was used to working without the daily presence of the Lt. Governor in Puducherry.

My OSD informed me that the Chief Secretary told him,

“Madam can call me to help clear the files”. I found it rather strange for the CS to be suggesting this. It was sinister.

I told my OSD to inform the CS that he should focus on his work. The LG’s office will decide files in the best interest. He was free to record his views which we would duly consider.

He conveyed that his service is “to be invisible and not seen”. I explained to him that if he addresses issues ‘in person,’ it will make a

noticeable difference in the speed of administrative recovery of the UT, even more so, if we both venture out together, co-opting all officers.

I was disappointed when the CS avoided joining me in my field visits.

It would only mean a few hours on the weekends, galvanising rank and file. Together we would meet the deadlines set by the Government of India in the Swachh Bharat movement.

To my dismay, many officers informed me that the CS was discouraging them from being on-site or accompanying me. Some still came out of courtesy. They liked the fact that a Lt. Governor was working with them. After all, they were the locals. Puducherry was theirs.

It neither changed him nor did he respond to any of my messages.

As time passed, I saw that whatever written directions I sent to him never returned. I got no feedback either. I still have the note where he had written, ‘Send the file only if Raj Nivas asks.’

Soon after taking charge, I invited top industrial leaders from Bangalore. A team led by Mr. Mohan Pai came to brainstorm for possible investments in Puducherry and ease of doing business. The CS showed indifference in any follow-up plan despite my request to kick-start and resolve. We formed a WhatsApp group to coordinate with them, and he just left the group soon after.

None of the decisions and ideas I was generating in my daily 10:00 am meetings were followed up or reviewed at his end or in his meetings.

Niti Ayog asked us for a 15-year vision document. I sent him the same but heard nothing.

The French Council General and a Japanese team came with business proposals. I sent them to CS and, again, heard nothing from him.

He would leave the station without any intimation to the LG office. I would only know about his travels when flight bills came to me for approval. He never submitted a tour note of his official visits.

A serious incident happened when the most oversized garbage dump yard of Puducherry, called Kurumbapet, caught intense fire. The entire vicinity was in thick clouds of poisonous smoke.

He did not even care to visit the site. On my return from the tour, I went straight to the site and asked him to join me at the blazing mountain of the city garbage, a legacy dump yard.

Grievances reported in the papers the following day for appropriate action got no response. My Additional Secretary, Mr. G. Srinvas, kept sending him reminders, but nothing worked. He termed responding to such reminders a 'waste of time'.

He unilaterally decided to reject my proposal for instituting a training centre. He recorded on file, 'not needed'. He never returned the file to me until I sought the action taken and found he had rejected the proposal.

He had a habit of keeping officers waiting for their postings for months together, despite many reminders from all directions.

Service matters of Group A and B officers required the approval of the Lt. Governor. He found ways to violate it. He would transfer a competent officer using my absence from Puducherry while on tour. He would repeatedly do this, despite my written directions, to desist from doing so.

As per the business rules, all Civil Services Board recommendations required my approval, which he termed 'political interference'.

Further, he would resort to placing officers as an adjunct to avoid the Civil Services Board, which would have mandated LG's approval.

I asked for the removal of unauthorised and illegal hoarding; there was no follow up.

Isha Foundation was keen to conduct an Inner Engineering course in Puducherry for many officers collectively. Nothing happened. We lost a valuable opportunity.

He never pursued my mentoring notes in his meetings with officers, based on my observations for a collective understanding. He wrote, on some files, 'inform her only if she asks.'

Despite reminders, I did not receive a single weekly report from him, mandated by business rules. His non-adherence was influencing a few others too.

Statement of Weekly Reports

REPORT ON DISPOSAL OF IMPORTANT CASES - RULE 19 OF "RULES OF BUSINESS OF GOVERNMENT OF PUDUCHERRY, 1963"					
STATEMENT SHOWING THE REPORTS RECEIVED					
Sl. No.	Name & Designation of the Officer	Total Weeks since July 2016	Weeks for which Reports received	Compliance Percentage	Remarks
1.	Shri Manoj Parida Chief Secretary	28 weeks	Nil	Nil	No report received
2	Dr. G. Narendra Kumar Development Commissioner	28 weeks	5 Weeks	100%*	*Furnished reports when held additional charge
3.	Dr. V.Candavelou, Commissioner-cum-Secretary(Finance)	28 weeks	Nil	Nil	No report received
4	Shri B.R. Babu, Secretary (Health, Tourism)	28 weeks	23 weeks	96%*	*Last four weeks on Election Observer duty
5.	Dr. S. Sundaravadivelu Secretary (Personnel)	28 weeks	25 weeks	89%	Report not received for 3 weeks
6	Shri R. Mihir Vardhan Secretary (Works)	28 weeks	28 Weeks	100%	
7	Shri P. Jawahar Secretary (Local Admn.)	28 weeks	22 weeks	100%*	*Six Weeks on Mid Phase Training
8	Shri MRM Rao Secretary (Fisheries)	28 weeks	6 weeks	50%*	*Six Weeks report received out of 12 weeks since Nov 2016
9	Shri D. Manikandan Secretary (Agri)	28 weeks	25 weeks	89%	Last three weeks report not received
10	Shri Arun L. Desai Secretary (Ind)	28 weeks	28 Weeks	100%	No report received

He would not send files cleared by the Cabinet that needed my approval on policy notifications, such as one on water policy. The policy suffered from legal infirmity and was ex post facto approved.

I never saw the Chief Secretary respecting the minutes of the meetings of all the presentations I forwarded, hoping that the Chief Secretary will pursue. He was a big letdown. His colleagues noticed this omission.

He issued a cancellation order of the WhatsApp Group 'Prosperous Puducherry', knowing fully well that the LG had formed this group to forge internal coordination and collaboration amongst all departments as a vital tool for sharing information instantly. Be it a grievance, policy matter or the latest instruction essential to know.

The most significant irregularity I detected was that he approved grant-in-aid at his level, which otherwise required LG's approval. It meant sanctioning a financial largesse without following the due procedure and conditions as laid down. It led to a network of irregularities, including the Grant-in-aid funds that were not open to the delegation as per the General Financial Rules (GFR) approved by the President of India.

I made a clear order for the files to be sent to me. It got stiff resistance from vested interests, but I did not give in as financial management was my compelling responsibility as the administrator. The political establishment legally challenged this, and the judiciary upheld my order.

The CS was also discourteous. He would be late for official functions to Raj Nivas, make his presence felt and leave early. It was pointed out by many. I had to issue written instructions to all Secretaries to observe required procedures at formal and official events.

The UT administration clearly showed poor performance in PM's centrally sponsored schemes. The central Government reminded us repeatedly to improve, but my challenge was, whom do I instruct?

In my meeting with the Union Home Minister Mr. Rajnath Singh, I apprised him of the limitations.



The CM gave the same CS an outstanding annual appraisal. I truthfully reviewed it and gave him an adverse report based on evidence. I followed up with the Central Government to transfer him out of Puducherry.

Puducherry finally got a new Chief Secretary.



Scan QR for a related Document



CHAPTER 36

NEW CHIEF SECRETARY A FACILITATOR



Mr. Ashwini Kumar, the newly appointed Chief Secretary, was a class apart. He was known for his integrity and being nonpartisan.

My first message to the Chief Secretary was recorded in my notes and emailed.

Ashwani, let us work together to rescue Puducherry from inefficiency and corruption.

Hold an open house daily for people. You will have many wanting to come to you. Scheduling visiting hours for appointments will encourage them to share their grievances with you in person without disturbing you during the non-visiting hours. It will build trust in the system and make them feel co-opted.

All references coming from the LG office be kept fully tracked.

Put a file tracking system in place so that no file is lost or delayed. I shall keep mentoring you as we go along.

This much for now. As I observe, I shall share. You, too, feel free to interact. You can preserve these notes electronically as archives to refer to them from time to time.

Feel free to cross-check anything. You have a friend in me, one you can trust for the good of our service here.

God bless. Kiran

I also sent a mentoring note* to all departments to support him.

There was a marked change in the way files were coming to me now. He did not ask to be called to my office to influence my views. Contrary to his predecessor, he was always open to discussions when called. He did not say he needed permission from the Honorable Chief Minister.

He was a man of few words and professional in his approach. He respected my decisions conveyed on file and ensured their implementation. Clearly saying the orders were final. As was the practice, he did not let the files get lost or rewritten as part files.

He reviewed and tracked the decisions conveyed. He also came when the worst had stood exposed and was in the process of change.

We kept going and dealt with varying political demands in his way, nowhere bringing me into the picture. Very soon, we were predictable to each other in our responses because both were following and upholding the Government of India's business rules, policies, and directions.

Some tried to take advantage of his quiet nature as a thorough gentleman. As it is, he did not give away his mind quickly. Not

*Scan QR for the mentoring note

understanding Tamil, he could not comprehend what the ministers were discussing during cabinet meetings. He remained quiet. The ministers were left wondering about his views. Ashwani instead would write his opinions on the file. Many ministers lamented this.

He was very respectful of initiatives in community collaboration and fully supported them. He observed due protocols and was the total opposite of his predecessor.

Because of his integrity, we saved crores of rupees from getting diverted and wasted. We could meet the administrative commitments such as salaries, pensions, essential services, loans, and other budgeted commitments.

For lack of political will, sick institutions were being released grants-in-aid violating financial rules. The departments were also not generating enough money internally. The CS ensured files reached me for prior approval because the financial constraints and regulations demanded it, despite the HCM writing on file, 'not to be sent to LG'.

The CS, my Secretary and I could collectively take decisions on issues that had been corrupting the Government for decades. He wholeheartedly supported direct bank transfer of money for free rice to the beneficiaries, rather than going in for expensive, protracted contracts ridden with leakages at all levels. The political establishment fought for contracts and contractors.

Our decision to do direct bank transfers (DBT) against the cost of free rice to the beneficiaries below the poverty line (BPL), scholarships, festive bonuses and more stood the test of Judicial scrutiny. We complied with the Government of India directions.

Due to the sagacity of the Chief Secretary and his belief in the rule of law, Team Raj Nivas could meet the onslaught of several hostile challenges the HCM placed before the Supreme Court.

Together we succeeded in providing solid legal affirmation of the financial and administrative role of the LG office, being questioned by the political classes daily. We cleared the falsely created perception formed by the CM.

The CM lost the plot.

Unlike the former CS, who refused to come to the meeting, claiming it was not required and needed prior permission from the HCM. There was a breakdown in any communication, which only kept many severe matters of public concern pending.

We also held regular monthly reviews to take stock of departmental performance. All Secretaries attended it. There was enough to review progress in all scores of centrally sponsored schemes, closely monitored by the Government of India. These were very productive.

Our meetings were followed by dinner, which made us bond and unwind.

One person in the right position made all the difference.



Scan QR for Photos & Graphics

Monthly Meeting with all Secretaries



CHAPTER 37

THE POWER OF ONE X ONE



*Sowmya Saurabh, Department Secretary
With Her Baby Attending One-on-One*

I tweeted a picture of Sowmya Saurabh, department secretary who attended a one-on-one with her baby in her arms. It was so heartwarming.

One-on-one meant that the officer and I would meet with no one else present to talk confidentially without notes.

It was an effort to know the officer, personally and professionally.

This communication in confidence was over and above my interactions through WhatsApp messages, visits, emails, or meetings in the office. But the one-on-ones helped bond beyond hierarchy.

It was about the person and his feelings. His work or any issues that made him uncomfortable, the place where he came from, education, family, hobbies, and special needs, if any, could be of value to the LG office.

If he or his family had health issues or other issues about the education and employment of his children. It enabled me to know if we could be of any assistance.

It worked. I got to know the officers' educational strengths and whether they were in a position where their special academic qualifications could be of added value. Also, if they were comfortable and getting a sense of purpose.

I got to know them by their first names and addressed them by that rather than formal surnames, which we knew.

This round one made me connect with them.

I now could see the face in my communications. The responses became warmer and more prompt.

I then enquired about their work habits. If they maintained a schedule? A diary for the weekly plan? Field visits? Visitors hour? Tracking system? Do they need any specific training? They got a feeling of having been heard and started to have the LG as their confidanté.

It was working together, knowing each other. We mutually decided the priorities. It was jointly educative.

Most of all, the one-on-one governance principle created a level playing field, boosted internal engagement, enabled two-way and real-time feedback and raised work experience.

After I covered the entire team, I got on to round two.

It gave me an insight into their work and where they stood? Sridhar, my Additional Secretary, tracked records and sent them the plan for review, their vision ahead and more.



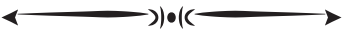
These interactions added affection and care to our work. We interviewed and interacted with all the other officers who went through the one-on-ones to get to know them closely.

A secretary after the meeting said, “Madam, wish we had started our careers like this”.

Together we were empowered- together we grew-
We became ONE for 'Performance with Purpose'.







Scan QR for Photos, Videos, Graphics & Officer List



Agile Governance

CHAPTER 38

PUDUCHERRY WATER-RICH



Puducherry was water-starved due to diminishing rain and the absence of a comprehensive water policy.

There was no standard operating system for water replenishment and regular dredging. The water cycle stood broken.

The daily Open House, Grievances Redressal system, Social Media Sources and Weekend Morning Rounds gave me a direct narrative of the impending water famine. It was worrisome. Solutions were urgently needed.

On the Water Day, we in Raj Nivas decided to strategically observe this day by inviting the members of the Cabinet to Raj Nivas to make public their plans (if any) of making Puducherry Water Rich.

Most of them came, but to what benefit? I was not sure. When given the mike for his views on the subject, an elected MLA started lambasting the Government for something altogether different.

He tried to hijack the purpose of the occasion. Before the situation went out of hand, I requested the MLA to limit his speech. He created a scene and walked out. His behaviour caused some diversion.

However, we coined the term ‘Puducherry Water Rich’, hashtagged it and reminded the Secretary of Agriculture, Mr. Anabarsu, that he is the “Waterman of Puducherry”. He publicly accepted to take up the responsibility.

Team Raj Nivas had to strategise diversely and differently to gain promising outcomes. We decided to use every occasion and possibility to involve people and focus more on water harvesting, both in rural and urban areas.

We issued a public call to increase their participation and responsibility.

The Public Call



Methodically, we proceeded to make Puducherry water-rich, step by step. We got into the history of Puducherry to comprehend the challenges. Puducherry was the cradle of civilisation over 2000 years ago and had very well-established community involvement in cleaning up the irrigation canals and maintaining them.

During the reign of the Chola dynasty, the primary duty of village assemblies was to desilt the tanks every year. It was an exercise to secure a proper depth for water storage for the summer season. Once the French took over in 1889, they brought into existence *Caissie communes*. This institution helped bring together cultivators of one or more villages to undertake the irrigation work for their common benefit.

In the 1970s, the system of bore wells became prevalent as a workable solution. Initially, the shallow aquifer was recharged with annual rainfall and restored the water tanks. Although, only 20% of it regenerated the underground. In Puducherry, the traditional tank irrigation system collapsed between the 1960s and 1990s. A Tank Rehabilitation Project undertaken between 1999 and 2004 with 43 Crores of World Bank funding recharged and dredged all tanks and channels. The Public Works Department formed the Tank Association and revived the system to ensure its proper functioning. Between 2004 and 2008, the Public Works Department continued the system with their departmental funds as the World Bank-funded project ended in 2004. In 2009, The Tank Association got dissolved.

So, from 2009 till 2016, there were no coordinated regeneration systems. Malpractices were underway for all withdrawals and extractions, tube well digging, free electricity, and unmetered water. Some farmers were even selling water piped out by water tankers from their lands. Without realising, they were draining themselves out cheap.

Seawater intruded into shallow aquifers and started to turn them saline. The overuse of groundwater, neglect, intrusions in the tanks, and

pollution caused by untreated sewage discharged into water channels, and urban drains resulted in rapid deterioration and depletion of water resources.

Gingee and Pennai rivers, the primary water sources, stopped flowing during the non-monsoon months due to rampant urbanisation and illegal sand mining.

The Open House, *Morning Rounds, and Grievances Portal constantly alerted the administration and put all on notice.

#TEAM RAJNIVAS WEEKEND ROUND 169

TeamRajNivas on its 169th Weekend Round persuing it's efforts to make #PuducherryWaterRich by today visiting Farmers with NGOs such as Swaminathan Foundation and Dhan Foundation at Mariamman Koil Thidal, Sombupet Village, Mannadipet Commune. Following depts were present. Director Agriculture, Nabard, Commune Commissioner, PWD, DRDA, Dhan and Swaminathan Foundation representatives



Due to easy accessibility to the Raj Nivas, the aggrieved farmers had a listening post and were not willing to give up.

The defunct Tank Association, NGO PondyCan, headed by Probir Bannerjee; V Chandrashekhar, President- Bangaru Voikal Cluster Association, Puducherry and his associates, persistently sought meetings and interventions to revive the dredging measures. However, they were not entertained by the establishments.

Failing to dredge channels and clean urban drains in time would result in a double whammy, both as water crisis and flooding in low lying urban areas of Puducherry.

Scan QR for Full Blog

Most of the irrigation channels and urban drains were too dangerous to be cleared manually. Over the years, the clean-up operations needed heavy machinery to dredge rural channels and urban gutters, ditches, and watercourses of hardened debris.

All this entailed a high financial cost. There was a state of despair.

But Team Raj Nivas and the respective juniors of the concerned departments continued to visit the sites needing attention to seek solutions. They knew where the problem was.



Then came the tipping point during our visit to the Sintheri irrigation channel. It revealed the magnitude of the legacy and the financial resources required to dredge them.



Visit to Sintheri Irrigation Channel



The Choked Channels

The public officials with a few seniors of various departments were present on-site.

I asked the officials present, “Why is the machinery not being used to dredge these channels?”

They replied, “Madam, there is no budget provision for dredging channels. Contractors are not responding to our requests to do it on credit, as they know the department may not pay money.”

A contractor was present on-site with the machinery and previously did some irrigation work on the main channel.

I asked him, “Why don’t you do this work?”

He replied, “Madam, we can do it; but the department has not paid for our past work, which is why we will not take up work further.”

I asked him, “If I clear your bill immediately, how much will you charge for this canal?”

“Madam, 4 to 5 Lakhs,” he answered confidently.

I then asked him, “What were the charges earlier?”

He replied, “Around ten lakhs.”

My interaction with the contractor became the tipping point.

Rain would have flooded the area if we had not gone on the ground and relied on the paper reports instead. Resultantly, we would have demanded flood relief and later drought relief. Vested interests would have lined up their pockets with the money of the poor. Some local vested interests would have made money out of providing tankers too. And distributed water as a favour done.

The rich were buying mineral water to drink and even bathe in filtered water.

I told the contractor, “You work. I shall arrange the four lakhs for this irrigation channel.” I thought I would donate from my savings and raise support.

I told him to go ahead. There was instant jubilation.

The contractor agreed to start the work immediately on my assurance.

I went straight from the site to the neighbourhood oxygen plant, INOX, India’s leading Industrial & Medical Gas manufacturer.

I told their General Manager, “You are using so much of the groundwater to run your oxygen plant. Should you not take social and corporate responsibility to replenish it? Can you not adopt the Sitheri Channel and contribute to the cost of its desilting? After that, maintain it, so that maximum water gets stored in this. As the water table improves, it shall benefit you and all the ponds and tube wells.”

He passed the buck for the crisis decision to his Chief Executive Officer and would discuss this later.

I showed him my urgency that we needed to resolve this early. “How about connecting me with the CEO now, if possible?” I asked.

He finally did. I explained to the CEO the ground situation and proposed a plan by which we could dredge the canal within the next few days. There would be no bureaucracy; the PWD department shall facilitate and supervise the work between INOX and the contractor. The contractor will be hired by the company and paid directly.

The CEO agreed to adopt the channel.

The work started within days, with beneficiaries offering prayers and breaking the coconut as an auspicious ritual. I, too, was present there.

We had our first breakthrough.

But we needed friends and supporters.

I decided to use the power of social media. I connected with my friend, Dr. Maria Zeena Johnson, Chancellor of Sathyabama University, became the first donor.



We made this support public to encourage and inspire others to join in this mission.



I shared this to make people believe in the value and power of corporate social responsibility.

Team Raj Nivas, led by Mrs. Asha Gupta, Comptroller Raj Nivas, played a stellar role in identifying and generating prospective donors. Most of the persons she approached welcomed the idea as they realised it was a call for survival.

The method of direct hiring the contractor by the donor company appeared very facilitating. No files, no approvals. Contractors, too, came forward knowing they would get the payments immediately on completion of work. Some contractors even offered to volunteer to help themselves.

All 23 Rural irrigation Channels were successfully dredged and restored by community support.

The farmer’s community rejoiced. There shall be water to meet their agricultural demands and other needs even with moderate rain.

*These irrigation channels would further fill the lakes, tanks and ponds.



Scan QR for Full donor gallery and evidence of transformation

We then shifted our attention to the urban channels, fearing that if left un-dredged, it would cause flooding causing more damage to people, businesses, and residential colonies in low-lying areas. We needed additional support.



On weekends, we decided to move out together in a 30-seater Puducherry Transport Corporation (PRTC) bus.

We would assemble at Raj Nivas in the early hours of the weekends. This enabled discussions and group decisions that cut out delays. Implementation was subjected to reviews too. All related department officers went together to planned and unplanned destinations.

We visited various water-guzzling industries, university campuses, educational institutions, large residential and office complexes to inspect their water harvesting structures and more. We spared none.

We found that most of them extracted groundwater with impunity and callousness, barring exceptions.

They felt embarrassed and apologetic when we visited the sites, which compelled them to make a time-bound commitment. All this became public knowledge.

Site visits in the early hours of the mornings



It brought synergy and cheer to the administration, breaking hierarchies across all ranks. We snacked together while travelling. Asha, our

Comptroller, looked after us. We wrapped up our morning round with a wholesome breakfast at Raj Nivas.



This practice brought forth bonding and sensitivity. Due to this, many more initiatives followed. It led to cleaning up scores of ponds, dredging irrigation canals, tanks, and lakes, all because they came under the radar.

We achieved what we set out.

We prevented flooding despite the heavy rains we received in the year. No more filth and excreta entered people's homes or shops.

Puducherry would have faced a considerable water crisis without this collective focus like the neighbouring State.



**SRI LAKSHMI NARAYANA
INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES**

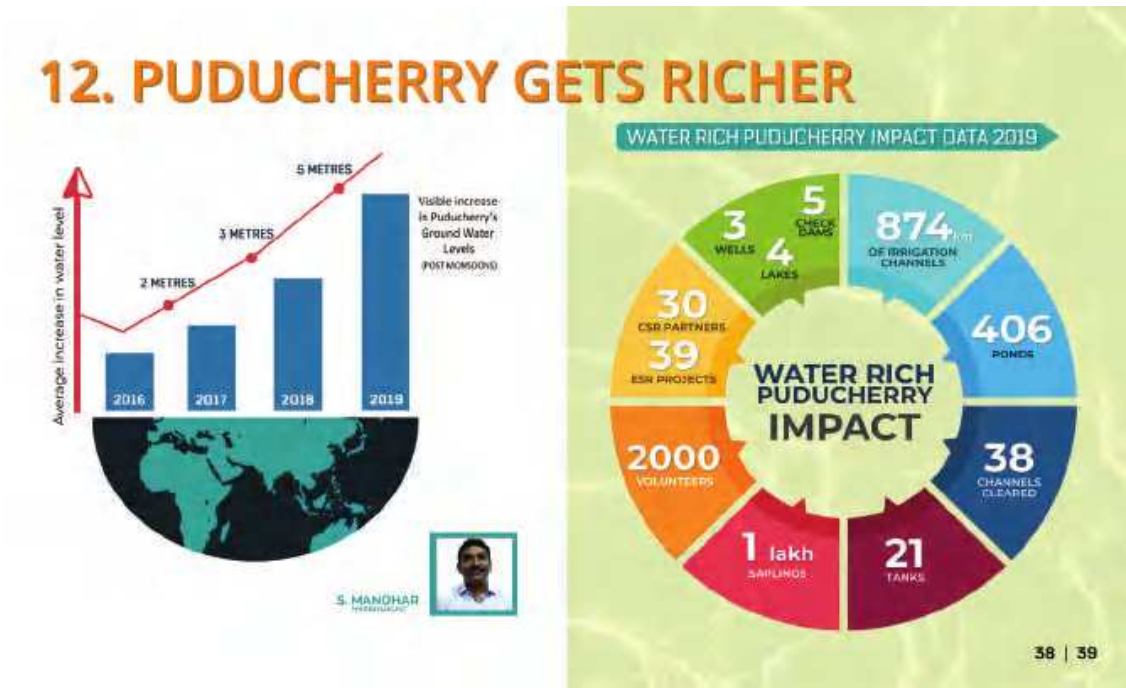


Location: Pillaiyarkuppam Authuvoikkal
Feeds 1 tank | benefits 76 acres, 4 villages.

MANAKULA VINAYAGAR
Group of Educational Institutions



**Location: Guduvaiyar from downstream side of
Uruvaiyar bed dam**
Feeds 3 beddams | benefits 260 acres, 4 villages.



Scan QR for ‘Water Rich Puducherry’ Model

Swachhta Hi Sewa Award





Besides the donors, we rewarded our performers - Dr. T Arun and Vikranth Raja, the Collectors of Puducherry, for strengthening Mission Water Rich.

The GOI also recognised Vikranth for his unique water-rich initiatives in Karaikal and the Public Works Department (PWD), instrumental in making Puducherry water-rich.

We invited the Hon’ble Minister of PWD as the Chief Guest and even rescheduled the date for his convenience. Despite that, he did not turn up at the function, instead sent in a written regret with his greetings.

The HCM, however, called our work a Himalayan SCAM and demanded a CBI inquiry into this work.



SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR
CHIEF SECRETARY, PUDUCHERRY

I recollected last year when Hon’ble Lieutenant Governor gave that nudge.

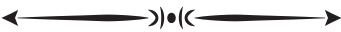
I’ve not seen this kind of collaborative effort where the public and Government came together and did something good. Unlike the typical CSR contributions, where the money goes to the Government, CSR Donors directly paying the contractor ensures hope & satisfaction to the contributors and shows visible results in a couple of days.

It is now a challenge for the community to take ownership, make it systematic, and carry it on. It affects what the Government of India talks about through Jalshakti4Janshakti & Jal Shakti Abhiyan.



SHRI DEVESH SINGH
SECRETARY PWD, PUDUCHERRY

Although the PWD has the responsibility of cleaning the channels, shortage of funds was a major challenge to take up the work. “We went in for Public Donations to ensure that the channels were cleaned without delay. The untiring effort of Hon’ble Lieutenant Governor Ms. Bedi had paved the way for the amazing outcome. It is an unparalleled initiative in the history of Puducherry.



THE BLACK BALLOON PROTEST



Tour to Yanam – An Outlying Region

Union Territory of Puducherry comprises four enclaves- Puducherry District, Karaikal, Mahe, and Yanam. The first two are ringed by the neighbouring states of Tamil Nādu, while Mahe is adjacent to Kerala, and Yanam to Andhra Pradesh.

Yanam, the poorest and most deprived region of Puducherry, was declared the ‘Aspirational’ district by NITI Ayog - A polite word for a backward area.

I made three trips to the region. After six months of taking charge, my first visit was the first introduction to the place. The connectivity to the area was not direct. We had to drive to Chennai, take a flight, and move around by car. I recall how my OSD, Dr. Amrita Bahl and I were received and escorted by the then elected MLA. Without seeking my permission, he nudged out my ADC from his seat, plopped on it, and started to navigate the driver around places he had planned.

All three hours of the drive, he narrated nonstop about his work which seemed highly exaggerated. He also lamented that the administration was not conceding to his financial proposals.

My OSD and I, sitting behind, kept smirking, wondering what to make of this.

As we drove around this urbanised village, the MLA proudly pointed at a string of statues adorning the roadsides as his initiatives.

He then took us to an outrageous flower show to inaugurate. And then to address a public meeting he had organised, followed by a visit to his residence to show us one big room full of his trophies.

YANAM

My visit to Yanam proved to be like a light at the end of the tunnel for the 56,626 residents. They had perhaps never been visited by a Lt. Governor. And hardly by seniors.

Also, Yanam, a backward region, did not have a full-fledged Collector but a junior in civil services serving them.

Within days of my return to Puducherry, I started to receive pending grievances of Yanam that remained unattended for long. When I began to ask for a report on these, it started to cause some tremors. The more grievances came, the more I pursued matters. Being a faraway place from Puducherry, people found it difficult to travel to Raj Nivas Open House. However, they chose to communicate on WhatsApp and by post as it provides them confidentiality.

I felt the need to start a weekly virtual Open House with Yanam. But people did not join as they were afraid of their MLA.

Concrete evidence of legacy-maladministration began to arrive on many Yanam projects with financial implications. I could now relate

to the MLA's hidden intentions in his verbosity while occupying the car seat of my ADC. It started to make sense.

We at the Raj Nivas, became cautious on files concerning Yanam. The MLA, a member of the Cabinet, also the Health Minister of Puducherry, kept pressuring Raj Nivas for early clearance of his projects. He was the Minister overseeing Medical College Admissions (mal-admissions) and had running issues with me on medical college admissions scandals.

I planned my second visit; the MLA gave a press statement that said, "She should not visit Yanam until she approves the welfare schemes. If she toured Yanam without supporting the projects, we would teach her a fitting lesson."

I wrote a letter to the MLA.

Oct 15, 2019

Dear Hon'ble Minister:

I read with deep regret your press statement on Oct 12 that if I come on a visit to Yanam, you 'shall teach me a lesson'. I request you to withdraw this statement as it does not behove a Minister to say so for a Lt. Governor.

I have received two letters from you, dated Oct 12 and Oct 15, 2019.

I wish to say I have personally visited some essential issues of concern in Yanam and can discuss those matters with you if you can come to the Regional Administrator office at 11 am tomorrow on Oct 16.

You may please confirm with RA. Yours sincerely.

Kiran Bedi

One heavy financial scheme under a cloud was a 129 Crores wall construction along the Godavari River banks in Yanam. I sent an advance team to check things out before I arrived.

As my advanced team, I received the ground reality *report by Beena Sivan, Shivani Arora, and Vijayan, the videographer.

The MLA did not come to meet me despite my request.



The number of petitions in the open house was over 100 and extended by another day. I stepped out and addressed the public and informed them we were taking along the balance petitions to Puducherry to address these from there.

All petitions are part of the record and video-graphed by K Vijayan and Poonguzhali, the Videography team. We made a WhatsApp group of active citizens of Yanam. We integrated them with the grievance redressal system of Puducherry directly under the Chief Grievances Officer, Dr. Bascarane.

The Open House in Yanam gave the oppressed citizens a voice. This initiative liberated the residents from threatening and suffocating control of specific vested interests.

*Scan QR for Full Report

Also in the group were media members who heard citizens' voices for the first time.

From this tour, public activism picked up momentum. Yanam came to the forefront and centre stage. It challenged the administrative status quo of the public officials. They came under the spotlight and were more accountable in the enforcement.

Announcement Shared on the Integrated WhatsApp Groups

Integrated Whatsapp groups of citizens and public officials of Yanam have been formed for close interaction. Hence matters are now reaching the senior officers for correction.

Yanam people finally have a voice. It was all bottled up erstwhile. Now they have a release. Things can only improve from here and not go worse. Now onus on citizens and public officials of Yanam.



On return to Head office, I wrote to all Secretaries.

My Dear Secretaries,

My recently-concluded visit to Yanam makes me write to you to say that this region of Puducherry needs your attention mainly by your physical presence. Doing long distance virtual conferences and seeking paper reports alone does not reveal the actual situation. (In fact, by doing so, you are taking responsibility for being ill-informed).

People of the area need to be heard and seen by the leadership in administration.

The region's budget must first assure clean drinking water, sanitation, skill development, predictable health care, education, and nonpartisan policing. It demands tight financial prudence in expenses, investments, and any new projects sought. It also requires adherence to laws, rules, and procedures.

My tour has revealed inadequacies on all the above counts. These would not have come to my notice without my listening to people. You must hold an open house to hear people whenever you visit such places. It gives them the courage to share.

We, as an Administration, have yet to win the trust of the people. Communication, implementation, and coordination amongst conjoining departments will help earn the trust. Most of the people who came to my open house had genuine grievances.

They do not have the money to travel to Puducherry. Hence administration must go to them. The Regional Administrator does not have a working plan for a sensitive and rule-abiding administration.

However, I ask you to connect with Yanam beyond the files, projects, and sanctions to see things yourself. Please appreciate that you are responsible for ensuring its compliance according to law and directions once you sanction a project.

We must detect the need for deviations in flood engineering before it is too late, as has happened here. We must not be penny wise and pound foolish in our project work.

Solutions are best on the ground only when you review yourself.

Plan your tours, listen to people, ensure compliance with your sanctioned projects and allied departments and share inspections reports with all concerned.

I shall be back in Yanam in the middle of January and hope to see a positive change.

With best wishes.

Kiran

On my third trip to Yanam, I was welcomed by demonstrators holding full-blown black balloons. I deliberately got closer to the people when I heard them call from the crowd, “Madam, can you please come closer? We want a selfie!”.

The advance team briefed us on the State of affairs, and we addressed our priorities.

On the closure of the trip, a media person asked Mr. Theva Neethi Dhas, the OSD accompanying me, about the net achievement of the visit?

He quipped, “We brought sunshine to Yanam. Everything we do will now be visible to all.”

I wrote a letter to Secretaries after my tour to Yanam.

Bala /Shurbir/ Mahesh/Niharika/ Akansha /Arjun /Purva,

My Yanam trip has revealed an appalling situation of neglect and deficient administration. The poor are suffering the most there due to gross interference by the elected MLA. (He is a significant drain on our resources).

Irregularities were visible in almost all deals, such as an ill-planned budget not focusing on essentials such as clean water, clean streets, teachers in school, medical care, skill development, promotion of CSS, cost-effective solutions. Also, there is a lack of internal communication and a disconnect with the head office. People are scared, pretty bottled up, helpless, afraid to complain. There is a lack of any fear of law.

We have attempted to put systems in place if you care to read the note I sent from there.

On your planned visits once in three months, you will look at the town in totality.

And look at all aspects and share with counterparts. Meanwhile, get on VC with the young administrator.

When you visit, ensure you do not travel with the MLA. He overawes people by that. Whatever he shows, you have illegality and irregularity. Hence be alert as he will use that picture as an endorsement.

God bless. Kiran

PS: The Honourable MLA did not contest the Assembly election. Instead offered his seat to another candidate who lost. Yanam got a new MLA. He won narrowly.

Yanam got a new lease on life.

KARAIKAL

Mr. P. Parthiban, Collector, Karaikal, was a young IAS officer who had planned my visit. Mr. Kamalakannan, the Education Minister and MLA, Karaikal, was also present. He was delighted to receive me.

Much prior cleaning happened to make the city presentable. I learnt it from the messages I received, asking me to come more often.

My tour began with a meeting with all heads of departments of the Karaikal administration. Besides the Minister, three other MLAs from the district were also present.

The presentation, slide after slide, revealed how Karaikal had received a 'step motherly' treatment, as they said, all these years compared to Puducherry. I was dismayed at the enormous deficits in the budgetary needs of the district. The Collector had just joined a few weeks before my visit.

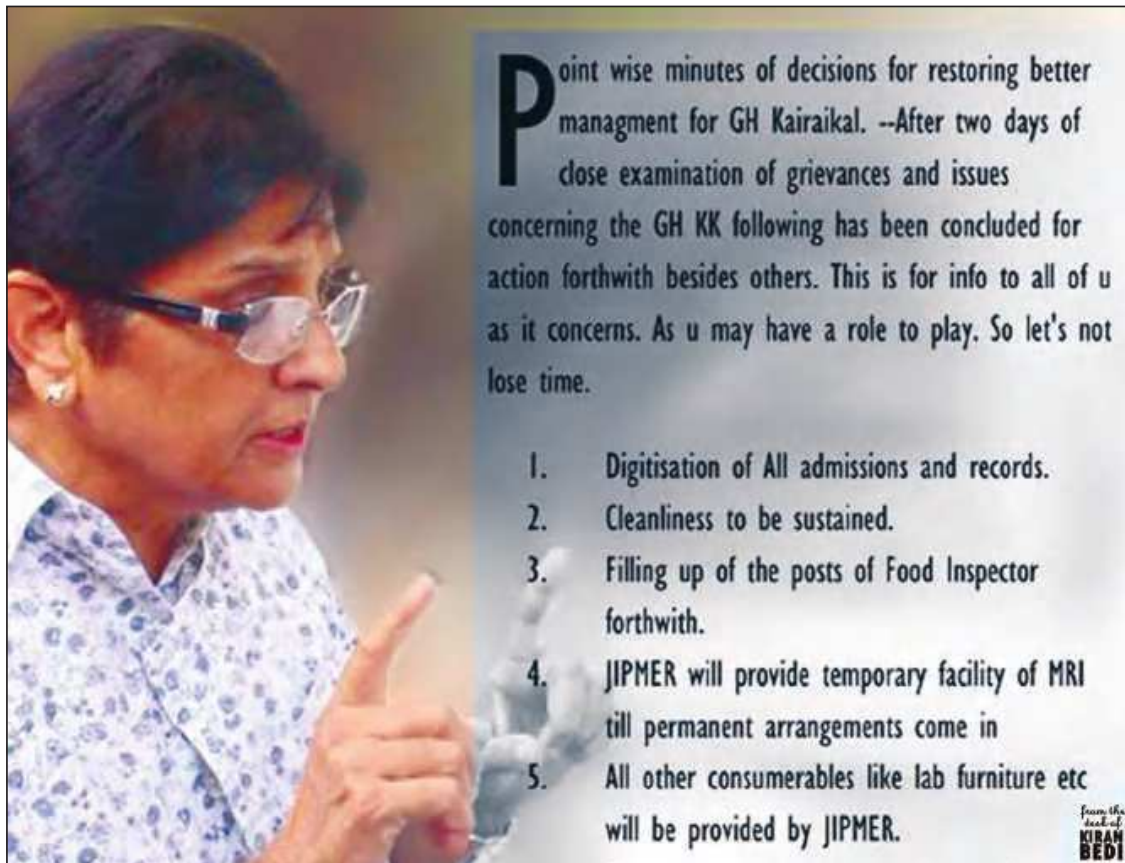
The people complained that no senior officer in recent memory had spent adequate time in Karaikal to review the district administration closely to inquire what was needed.

Karaikal region is part of spiritual heritage, the world-wide famous Shani temple. The senior officials and the VIPs frequently visited the town for their obeisance of the famous Shani temple, but not for the city's development per - se.

However, the presentation made by the Collector revealed serious inadequacies all around. My question to the officers was, "please show me what is right."

My visit to the General Hospital was painful. It showed severe neglect on several counts. I recorded my observation with solutions provided to remedy the situation.

Pointwise minutes of decisions were taken for restoring *better management at the GH, Karaikal.



After the meeting with the Heads of the Department, I met students. The Collector had arranged the meet in a sports stadium, which he said had not been operational since its construction. He opened it for my visit.

I was now in an auditorium with over 2000 students of Karaikal.

The issue was, what do I say? Do I tell them what the Government proposes to do with all inadequacies and assure them that it will be taken care of, like shortage of hostels, teachers, vocational guidance, buses, dispensaries, and even crimes against women?

Before this, I had requested my advance team led by Dr. Amrita Bahl, part of Lt. Governor Office, to do a survey asking what the administration could do for Karaikal?



The dip test revealed that the youth looked forward to collaborative community service with government agencies.

They suggested they would like to be part of Swachh Abhiyaan and offered to teach the younger children to fill in the teacher shortage.

I picked these two programs and got them included.

The following Saturday, the Minister planned a ‘clean up’ day, announcing getting together for the drive and serving breakfast to all participating students. There was a roar.

The students asked me to revisit them soon, as I bid them goodbye.

I willingly and enthusiastically told them, “I shall be back next month”. Hearing this, the Collector, Parthiban, remarked that he had exhausted all the cleaning funds on my current visit. It hit me hard, and the thought stayed with me as a serious concern.

The next day, as planned, there was a massive clean-up drive.

The Minister led it, and the city showed its youth power. It showed the potential of collaborative energy. They only needed a leader.

Follow up visit to Karaikal (a region of Puducherry) was very heartening. It was a quick one focusing on water issues.

On my second visit to Karaikal, I observed that the Collector, Vikrant Raja, who succeeded Parthiben, had done commendable transformative work in making Karaikal water-rich in very creative, cost-effective, and collaborative ways.

Leading from the front, he and his Collectorate involved public sector units and the local community in rejuvenating and recovering scores of lost ponds and water channels.

He removed encroachments from feeder channels to ensure that the Cauvery river flows into the ponds.

He received overwhelming support from the local community. Working collaboratively, they dredged 178 Ponds, cleaned up several kilometres of canals with the CSR funds and his meagre resources.

The water table improved by 10 feet within three months, even before the Northeast monsoon.

He drafted a standard operating system to institutionalise and make his work sustainable. The donors of that year adopted their respective channels and ponds and maintained them all year long. He was also planning a forest cover for Karaikal.

Raj Nivas recommended the Government of Puducherry nominate him for the civil services award to inspire all other Collectors to emulate him. Meanwhile, the Raj Nivas organised an event on November 4, 2019, to recognise and award all donors of Karaikal, including Vikrant Raja.

MAHE

Mahe is the smallest enclave of Puducherry, adjacent to Kerala. With a population of 41,816, it is a Malayalam speaking area of the UT, unlike Yanam, where Telugu is the spoken language, owing to it being situated alongside Andhra Pradesh.

I travelled by overnight train to get there. Mahe is literate and reasonably well off. It has a beautiful harbour with a walkway off the backwaters of the Arabian Sea. The Mahe river flows through Kerala and the coastal enclave of Mahe in Puducherry.

Many liquor shops are back to back to quench liquor thirst in Kerala. It is a source of excise revenue for the Mahe administration.

On my tour to the enclave, I found it the cleanest. Residents practiced micro-organic composting of Agri-waste system as a culture. They had home toilets and community toilets. They were not openly defecating as seen in other enclaves such as Puducherry, Karaikal and Yanam.

Mahe was one of the few early ones to declare open defecation free. Besides, they also had better officers to ensure this. Mr. Manickadeepan, the Resident Administrator, was deservedly recognised by the Government of India for his efforts. Aman Sharma, equally competent, succeeded him.

I preferred to plan my visits to Mahe on holidays and make them celebratory holidays so I could connect with people. We cycled around with the residents of Mahe, connecting with the youth and groups.

They had a conscientious MLA in Mr. V Ramachandran, the elected representative. He enjoyed a clean reputation which made my visit easier, making my stay comfortable, unlike the Yanam tour, where I had to hold an Open House spread over two days and still brought back a handful of grievances.

I used my presence to encourage officials to network more and increase technology to digitise all records and transactions. They were willingly striving towards it.

They needed funds for infrastructures like construction of a Townhall, Public library, Mahe riverside walkway repairs, National highway-17, municipal roads, government school buildings. All this depended on the availability of funds with the UT administration.

However, I suggested they make effective use of whatever existed, like organising cinema shows in the Municipal Townhall and using more LED lighting.

A literate population and trustworthy elected representative administered by conscientious public officials made Mahe stand out.



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Cycle Rally at Mahe

CHAPTER 40

DECLARATION OF WEEKLY DECISIONS



After a packed daily schedule of presentations, meetings, visitors and events, Neethi, my Secretary, would bring files to clear. Mr. Dhas always came after having studied and worked on them. Neethi would place before me the options to make informed decisions. We recorded our decisions on the files after due diligence.

My Secretary, Theva Neethi Dhas, was a storehouse of knowledge with deep institutional memory. He was thorough with laws, rules and regulations and was the backbone of the LG office. All officers of the administration knew his professional acumen. He was a no-nonsense man. He had served in Puducherry administration in various capacities across departments and knew their functioning inside out.

Because of his pre-preparation, our disposal of files was speedy. Interestingly, we realised they kept our quick decisions pending,

and beneficiaries were misinformed. We decided to publicise our decisions’ status in the public domain.

The decisions on the files concerned matters of appointments, transfers, recruitments, contracts, disciplinary issues, financial sanctions, amendments, policy notifications and more.

We circulated a weekly bulletin on the disposal of our files, thereby implementing the Right to Information in letter and spirit.

We stemmed the trading of lies.



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CHAPTER 41

FINANCIAL PRUDENCE

LACK OF SOUND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The prevailing fiscal culture in Puducherry has been one of profligacy. With the government relying on borrowings to pay its debt - even diverting from provident funds or withholding contractors payments to pay salaries in some departments- Something is seriously wrong in managing public monies. Therefore, the exercise of financial prudence has been a rude shock for those accustomed to violating financial rules.

- Kiran Bedi

Source: Raj Nivas Publications

The administrator is the custodian of the consolidated fund of the Union Territory of Puducherry. The payment and withdrawal of money is as per the rules approved by the President of India.

The administrator is authorised to incur expenses up to Rs.50 Crores in consultation with the Standing Finance Committee.

These financial powers placed colossal responsibilities on the position, encompassing all administration. Not many knew, including the media.

The administrator was entrusted with full powers to sanction grants and loans to autonomous bodies and State undertakings on Grants-in-Aid (GIA). And secondly to raise market borrowings and negotiated loans subject to the clearance by the Home Ministry, Government of India.

Having been briefed by the Law Secretary, I knew my powers. I also knew where I stood and had no time to lose. Besides, I had a very experienced team with institutional memory. But, I did not anticipate early on what a herculean challenge financial prudence would be.

On an evening, an awaiting newsman asked me about the friction between the Elected Government and LG.

I said, “None! Financial integrity is my priority. Every penny of the Government will be accountable. There would be no friction between the Elected Government and the LG once we follow the LAW.”

The Government of UT of Puducherry spent ten thousand crores of public money annually through its 30 departments.

Also, UT Government provides financial support to public sector companies, autonomous bodies, non-governmental organisations, including some private schools to meet the social, economic, and statutory obligations. There are 13 Government companies and 73 independent bodies in the UT, taking away 10% of the UT’s budget towards Grant-in-Aid.

I started to examine their allocations and usage closely. General Financial Rules (GFR) stipulated detailed procedures and conditions for releasing such grants (GIA). It was an area of concern.

The authorities were required to ensure the following conditions as per the written rules:

- (1) Relevancy of the organisation, i.e. justification for continuing or for winding up or for a merger of the organisation with some other legal entity;
- (2) Correct sizing and scope for out-sourcing the human resources;
- (3) Scope for maximising internal resources generation to reduce dependency on government budget;
- (4) Grant award will be based on viable and specific schemes disclosing specific quantified and qualitative targets to be attained.

Lt. Governor has not been authorised to re-delegate the said GIA sanctioning power to other subordinate authorities. LG was entirely responsible for the correctness, regularity, and propriety of financial decisions.

The Comptroller and Auditor General of India report for the year ending March 2017 (as mandated under Section 49 of the Government of UTs Act, 1963) submitted to the office of LG was an eye-opener.

The report revealed that Government had invested ₹723 Cr in 13 PSUs in which there were 4778 employees. The PSUs had till then accumulated a total loss of ₹ 640 Cr. The return on equity ratio was as low as minus 25.

Puducherry Government had not even formulated any policy for payment of minimum dividend on the share capital contributed by it.

Reviews with government departments revealed that many PSUs employees had appointed personnel far beyond the authorised strength and without following the rules of recruitment with the connivance of senior officers of the PSU.

The Anglo-French Textiles (a PSU of UT) was paying lay off compensation to workers out of GIA from 2012 onwards without getting any work, thus draining the public exchequer.

They had misappropriated the provident fund of the employees. It got revealed when the Commissioner-Provident Fund met me and gave me the list of these defaulting companies.

Other PSUs and Societies were in a similar situation, being fed every month by GIA for no work done.

The PSUs, autonomous bodies, and several (non-performing) societies were un-audited and dependent on Government Grants-in-aid even for paying salaries to employees, which exerted a heavy financial burden on the elected Government.

I found out that the Grants-in-Aid sanction was entirely within the purview of the LG office but sent no file to me. The CM was doing it. This diversion of public money was at the cost of other essential capital expenditures such as Public Works, Electricity and Health.

The departments could not settle the pending bills of contractors and suppliers, so goods and services had come to a grinding halt.

The department concerned could not take up the mandated scientific disposal of solid and liquid waste as directed by the National Green Tribunal for a shortage of funds.

Even when students lacked practical training, the Dental Government College could not replace its outlived dental chairs.

The list is long.

The elected Government of the day appointed a committee under the chairmanship of Shri Vijayan, a retired IAS officer, to study the feasibility of reviving some of the loss-making PSUs.

The committee submitted its report regarding 9 PSUs recommending either outright closure or revamping the companies. The findings were not acted upon, as the Government was reluctant to take policy decisions, which may not suit their electoral calculations.

The letters sent to CM or the Legislative Assembly to important flag issues drew no constructive response.

I wrote a blog on the issue and shared it widely.

October 6, 2018

In continuation to the ongoing Grants-in-Aid financial review surveillance is being carried out by Lt. Gov. office, of PSUs and Societies seeking Grant-in-Aid, the request for Grant for Sports Council of Puducherry was under examination last two days.

A meeting of all coaches was called to hear them.

All of them reportedly had not received salaries for several months. Over 33 of them came to Raj Nivas for an interaction today.

The revelations are distressing, to say the least.

- ◆ Coaches were appointed without following any rules of recruitment.
- ◆ They were inducted on an annual contract on an arbitrary salary in 2005. (First batch). So far, three batches have been recruited.
- ◆ Their salary increase is on the pleasure of the general body headed by the sports minister and aided by public officials.
- ◆ None of their annual contracts have been renewed since 2010.
- ◆ They have heard nothing in writing after the initial contract from the Dept.

They shared that they often provide the students with the equipment from their resources.

- ◆ Almost all coaches are in debt as they live on borrowed money or family and friends support.

They were all under the impression that they shall be regularised one day.

The Director of Sports has been handed over a copy of all responses. He has been asked to return with a plan from the Dept. urgently. Along with a draft sports policy for enabling urgent relief to the coaches.

I have told the coaches to promote love for sports, leading to character building. Let medal-winning not be their only goal when resources are highly deficient.

Dept. of Education must obtain due approval for any Grant in Aid sanctions as this financial power rests only with the Lt Governor office.

Under the above circumstances, my office directed the Chief Secretary and Finance Secretary to submit all GIA proposals to my office henceforth to take financial decisions as per the rules of the Government of India.

It was volcanic and created a big flutter.

I systematised the Provident Funds system to benefit other public servants whose PF was not deposited in their accounts hence not traceable.

I curtailed non-essential borrowings and concentrated on increasing the income of the Government from various sources.

I found there was much scope for additional resource mobilisation. In areas such as; excise duty, license fee, widening the GST base, levying/increasing local body taxes, property tax, cable TV tax, and rents of municipal buildings.

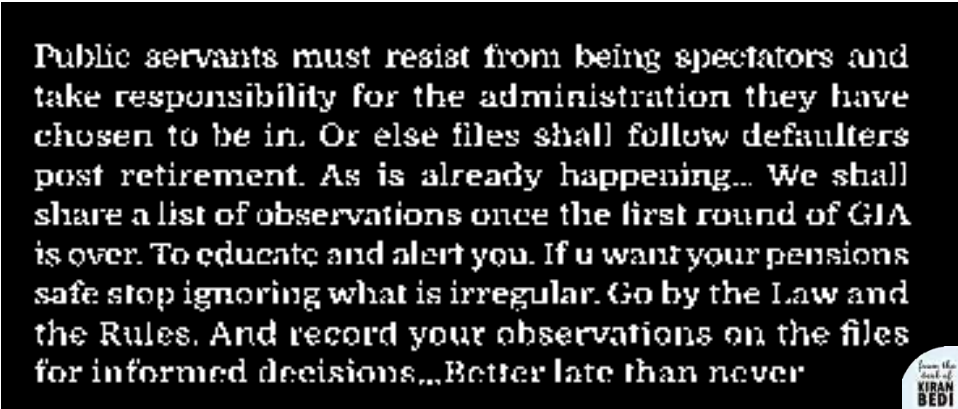
But to do this required strong political will.

We started to focus on ways and means to increase resources. Similarly, we stopped loan sanctioning to Government bodies without verifying their credit worthiness and repayment capacity.

My sanction was also required if they made any procurement through a single tender. I ensured that this, too, was strictly followed. Additionally, the execution of public works through nomination was eliminated to ensure healthy competition and thereby savings to the Government.

Public officials recovered their hard-earned dues and savings too. Besides, the administration provided them with their salaries in time and cleared other pending bills.

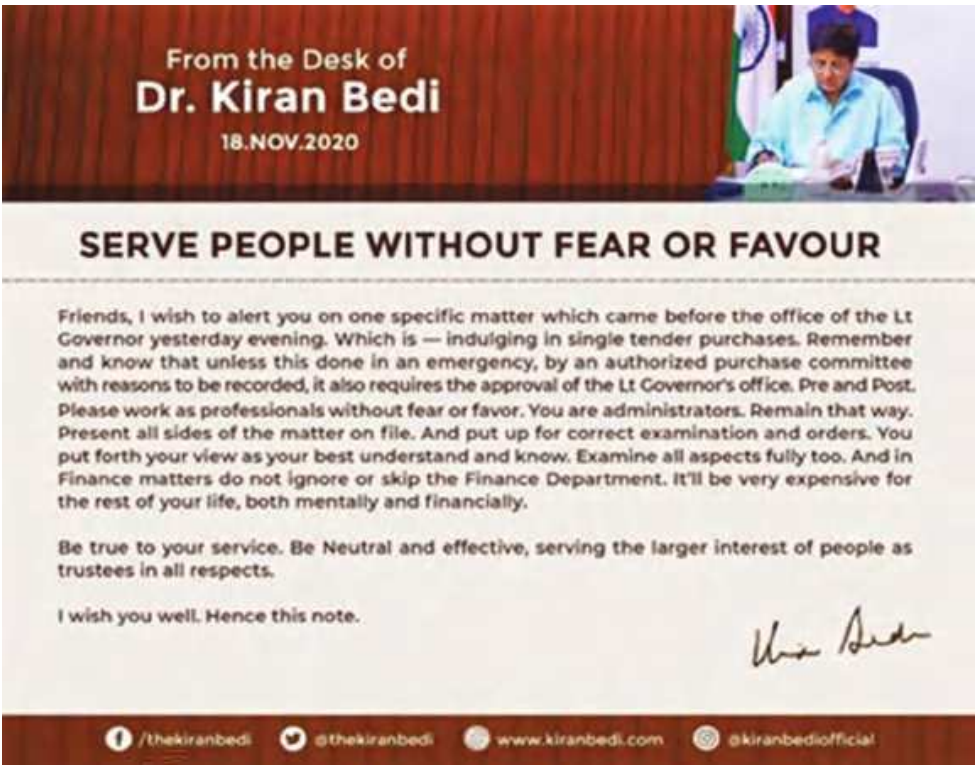
My Blog on Sharing of Information with Public



The real culprit of perpetuating financial imprudence was the former Chief Secretary, who allowed this irregularity to continue.

The new Incumbent corrected it as he followed the financial rules. Financial prudence in our administration returned.

The Honorable CM took the matter to Court but failed.



Scan QR for Full Blogs

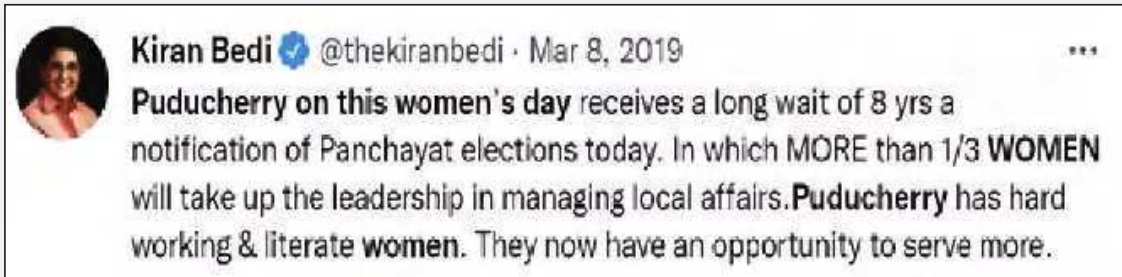
The financial powers of LG as stipulated under the General Financial Powers, Delegation of Financial Powers Rules and Government of UTs Act was challenged by Chief Minister before Hon'ble High Court, Madras. However, he could not succeed. The First Bench of High Court confirmed the financial and other powers of LG of Puducherry.



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CHAPTER 42

GRASSROOTS DEMOCRACY



Holding Local body elections became a cause for me ever since I took over as LG of Puducherry.

Post liberation from the French, no local body elections were held for 38 years, despite implementing the Puducherry Panchayat Act 1973 and Municipality Act 1973, which came into force on January 26, 1974.

The last Local Body elections were held in 2006 in Puducherry.

It deprived ordinary people of local self-governance in grassroots services such as water and sanitation issues, primary education, primary health centres oversight, village and cottage industries, essential roads maintenance, desilting of irrigation canals, groundwater management, child health care nutrition and more.

The Puducherry UT has 98 village panchayats, 71 in the Puducherry region and 27 in Karaikal Region. The administration of the Village Panchayats lay in the hands of the Panchayat President. 815 elected members exercised executive authority in all regions of Puducherry.

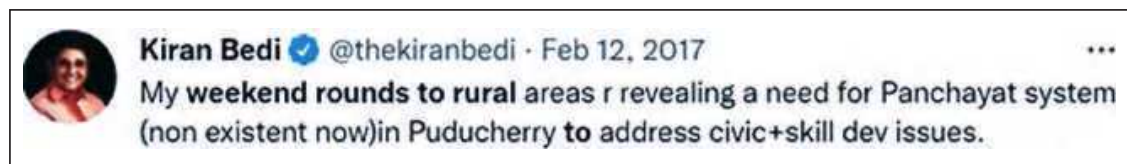
Local body elections were due in 2011 but remained pending despite orders from the Madras High Court and the Supreme Court. It was the role of the State government to complete the processes and hold the local body elections on time. The Government of Puducherry has been violating the laws all these years.

Less than a week after I took over as LG, a former Lok Sabha MP appealed to me to ensure that the local body polls occurred.

He said, “Rural development, fulfilment of basic amenities of the people, receipt of Central funds and inclusion of Puducherry in smart cities project suffered a jolt in Puducherry. Therefore, without further loss of time, kindly announce elections to the local bodies in consultation with the elected Government and ensure the working of the three-tier Government as mandated by the Indian Constitution. Let the rule of law prevail and let the rule of the individual end.”

I knew this was an issue I needed to deal with but was still settling into my role and understanding the position of the Union territory and my powers as an LG.

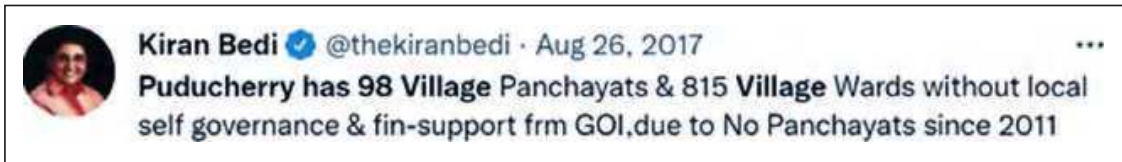
My weekend rounds to the rural areas revealed their conditions and how badly they needed self-governance via panchayats to take responsibility for themselves. To make them eligible for financial grants from the Central Government,



In May 2017, I requested the political establishment of the day to hold the local body elections. In my note to the Government, I said, “Puducherry does not have a Panchayat system (now) and is suffering because of the absence of effective and accountable grass-root coordination. It needs an urgent revival, and unless this happens, we will keep losing time and precious resources. Anyone could be the hub to bring the three together. There should also be realistic planning for all the stakeholders, and people would also gain a sense of ownership and leadership. It is called transformational democracy, and this is what Puducherry needs urgently for the larger good.”

I again reminded the Government in August 2017 but did not conduct the polls despite all my efforts. It was perhaps not politically suitable for them to have the elections.

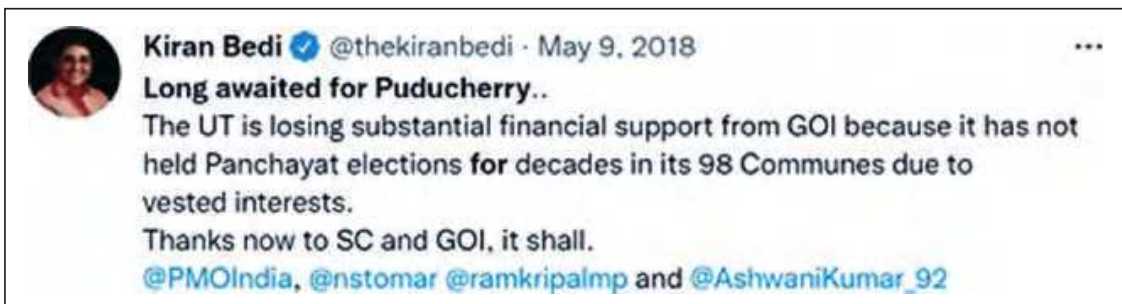
I kept informing the people of what they were losing and persuading their elected representatives.



The issue remained pending until May 2018, when the honourable Supreme Court finally issued a notice to the State Government to conduct the local body polls.

Therefore, the Apex Court directed the authorities to complete the delimitation of the municipality and panchayats within four weeks. The moment this is achieved, the election to the panchayats will be notified immediately.

I tweeted again to keep people in the loop.

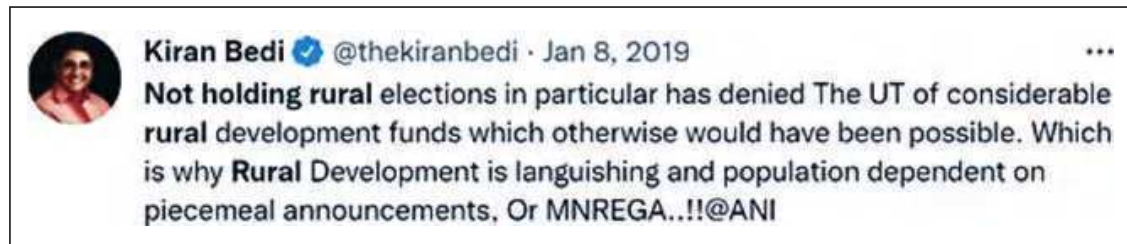


But despite the direction of the Supreme Court, the local body elections were not held. The political establishment found methods to delay it.

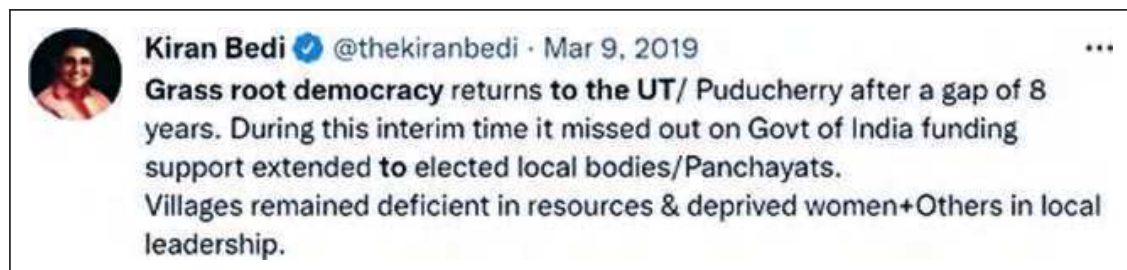
In December 2018, the same MP who had earlier appealed to me to ensure local body polls began holding me responsible for the delay in holding polls. I immediately refuted these charges and said that *“This matter of rural body elections is pending with the Chief Minister for*

long, and he has been stonewalling it for all these several months despite clear directions from the Supreme Court.”

Even in January 2019, when they brought up the freebies issue, I reiterated the need for local body elections to get funds from the Central Government.



After a meeting with the local administration, I finally decided that it was time to announce the delimitation of wards before the code of conduct came in (for the parliamentary election, which came in between) to conduct the polls immediately after the Assembly Elections in 2021.



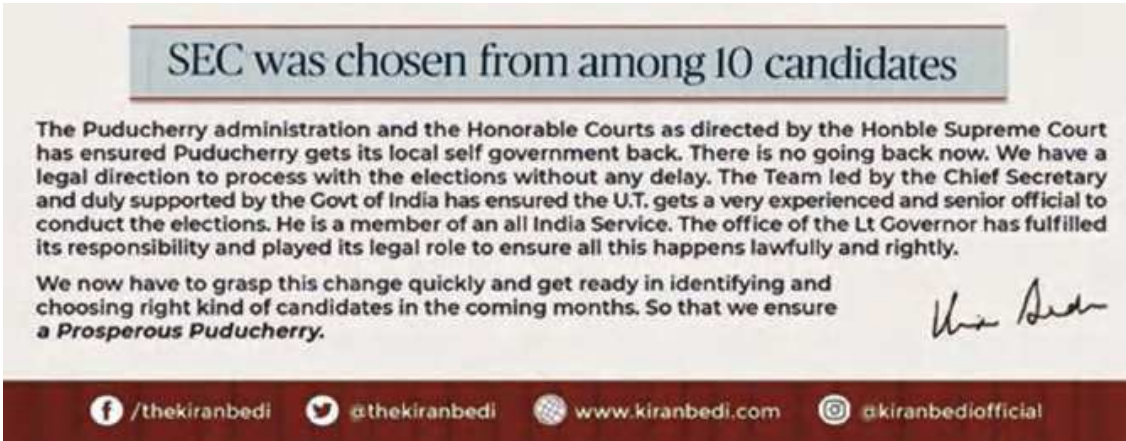
Against political opposition, my office issued a notification saying, “With the approval of Lt. Governor/Administrator, the Local Administration Department has published final notification of delimited wards in Extra-ordinary Gazette of Puducherry bearing Nos. 36, 37 and 38, dated 07/03/2019, are available on the website of Government Press in the Department of Stationery and Printing”.

Everyone expected that civic elections would now be held soon to comply with the directions of the Hon’ble Supreme Court and fulfil the aspirations of the people of Puducherry for grass-root democracy.

Meanwhile, the political establishment made the State Election Commissioner's irregular and illegal appointment. We lost time.

The position had to be annulled. The appointment had to be by the open process. The matter went to the Government of India and even to the Madras High Court. All this cost loss of time but again for those interested in delaying.

Finally, a suitable appointment was made by the committee headed by the Chief Secretary, Ashwini Kumar, *senior representative of MHA and one from the Ministry of Panchayat.



*Scan QR for Full Blog

A State Election Commissioner was finally in place, with a functioning office; dates were yet to be announced before I left Puducherry.

Hopefully, the UT will finally get its panchayat elections in 2021/22 (after 2006). Thanks to the Honourable Supreme Court of India.

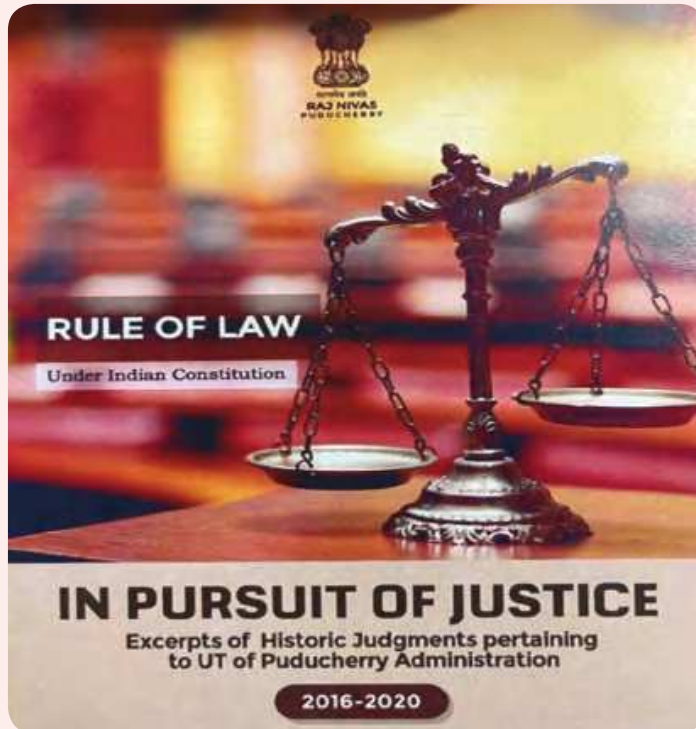


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CHAPTER 43

FEARLESS COURT BATTLES



The political establishment legally challenged the powers of the Lt. Governor in the Courts of Law on many vital issues.

They did it despite knowing the laws and the rules. Some of them called themselves legal Pundits. The CM himself was a practising lawyer. The main intention was to keep the Lt. Governor's office on edge, hoping to neutralise, slow it down or derail any change.

Team Raj Nivas and I were mindful of these machinations. We remained ahead of them because Courts kept ruling in our favour every time they challenged. Or we went in appeal.

We remained vigilant and agile at the same time, sensitive to any case of injustice. Our open and transparent functioning was our durability. We received early warnings. However, we responded with determination and evidence, either proactively or in response.

When history judges this service period, it will be apparent that we dislodged dishonesty and exploitation considerably.

The statements of two MLA's reportedly bears it out.

A prominent member of the opposition stated,

“With the Honourable CM repeatedly challenging the LG office in Law Courts, it has fortified the legal powers of LG office making the elected government weaker.”

The other was a statement by another MLA that said,

“What is the point in fighting elections now when we have no power left.”

The Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, succeeded in fully protecting the Lt. Governor's position by securing Court Judgments in the following concerns:

Capping the Fee of Medical Colleges, giving Voting Rights to Nominated MLAs, facilitating DBT mode of transfer of funds in shared schemes, selecting State Election Commissioner by an open method for Local Body Elections. Assertion of the Role of Lt. Governor as a bridge between the Union Territory & the Government of India. Even securing voting rights for the three nominated MLAs sworn in by the LG office and vehemently opposed by the entire political beings.

Eminent legal luminaries had to be engaged to defend. Matters went up to the Honourable Supreme Court in all the above cases.

CASE 1: MEDICAL SEATS

The first Judicial intervention was of capping of exorbitant fees charged by Private Medical Colleges. This intervention came because the political establishment failed to effectively intervene and deal with the prevailing legacy of organised extortion. They did not do so because vested interests were at stake.

Thanks to the extensive research done by Mr. VBR Menon, Public Interest Lawyer and supported by Assistant Solicitor General of India, Mr Srinivasn, we placed our case in proper perspective before the Hon'ble High Court.

After hearing all the parties concerned, the Hon'ble High Court of Madras (in WP 14232 of 2017) passed an interim order directing all Deemed University Medical Colleges to admit students on the Adhoc Fee of Rs.10 Lakh. Also, the Court directed the Ministry of Human Resource Development and the University Grants Commission (UGC) to constitute a Fee Committee to determine the costs charged by the Deemed University Colleges.

A Deemed University College challenged this in Hon'ble Supreme Court in SLP 19315 of 2017. The college sought an interim stay. However, Hon'ble Supreme Court instead extended the benefit of the order passed by the High Court to the students of the Union Territory. The Hon'ble Supreme Court directed UGC to constitute a Fee Committee to regulate the Fees charged by Deemed Universities.

The judgment in the case had its PAN India impact.

The battle to secure Justice for the meritorious students of Puducherry reached its logical conclusion by bringing the Deemed Universities under the ambit of the Regulatory body.



Students Seeking Justice at Lt. Governor Office

What started as a battle of Justice for Students of Puducherry left its large imprint in creating a new paradigm covering the entire Nation. This significant legal battle ripped off the bottom of the sacks of vested interests.

CASE 2: POWERS OF ADMINISTRATOR

For long, Hon'ble Chief Minister had been taking exception to the progressive functioning of the Office of the Lt. Governor. The trigger was when the Hon'ble Chief Minister directed the Finance Secretary not to meet me, claiming the LG has no powers to call the officers.

I took up the matter with the Ministry of Home Affairs. The MHA issued an advisory letter on January 20, 2017. This letter brought out the salient provisions of the Act and Business Rules of Government of Puducherry. It spelt out the integral role of the Office of Lt. Governor in matters of governance.

The CM kept equating the Union Territory with that of a State. He wrote a series of letters to question the advisory. The Ministry of Home Affairs, in June 2017, reiterated the integral role of the Lt. Governor. The CM carried on his litigation. Finally, the Division Bench of the Madras High Court set aside the judgment of the Single Bench, which had reduced the office of the Lt. Governor to a notional head. It was a setback for him.

CASE 3: FREE RICE DISTRIBUTION

The Hon'ble Chief Minister filed this case challenging the reference made to the Ministry of Home Affairs by the Office of Lt. Governor to do (DBT)-Direct Benefit Transfer of money meant for free rice to beneficiaries and implementing the policy of the MHA.

This decision was taken, keeping in view many problems in distributing free rice to the entitled below poverty lines (BPL) beneficiaries, such as pilferages, leakages, distribution of poor quality of rice.

The Council of Ministers wanted free rice distribution in kind and not DBT. It meant issuing tenders, engaging contractors, conducting negotiations on pricing. When we informed the Government of India of this difference of opinion, they gave directions to the HCM to follow the DBT model. Aggrieved at the decision, the Hon'ble Chief Minister himself filed the Writ Petition.

The Hon'ble High Court of Madras ruled that the orders of the Central Government were valid. The Honourable Court said that CM of a Union Territory could not challenge the order of the President communicated through the Ministry of Home Affairs since, as the head of the Council of Ministers, he had also taken this oath undertaking to abide by the provisions of the Constitution.

CASE 4: NOMINATED MLA'S

I had administered the oath of office on July 4, 2017, to the three proposed members after the Government of India issued a notification nominating them to become members of the Legislative Assembly of Puducherry. The Speaker had declined to recognise them and cancelled their nomination.

Challenging the Speaker's action, the aggrieved nominees moved to the Madras High Court, which upheld their nomination.

The Cabinet challenged this judgement before the Honourable Supreme Court. The Apex Court dismissed the appeals and upheld the nomination of the three members. They also directed that the nominated members exercise their vote in budget and a no-confidence motion against the Government.

The Honourable Supreme Court further said, unless provided by-law passed by the Parliament, every Union Territory is to be administered by the President; through an Administrator to be appointed by him with such designation as he may specify. "Thus, the administrator will be a central government when he acts within the scope of authority given to him under article 239 of the Constitution".

This judicial decision strengthened the administrator's legal position vis a vis political establishment.

CASE 5: APPOINTMENT OF STATE ELECTION COMMISSIONER

I had to annul an appointment of State Election Commissioner made by the elected Government, as it was in clear violation of Puducherry Village And Commune Panchayats Act, 1973.

I requested the Chief Secretary to seek the guidance of the Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs. The MHA issued clear directions to appoint the State Election Commissioner by following the law and a transparent process to select the best person for conducting local body elections.

Against this direction, the political establishment of the day approached the Madras High Court with a prayer to nullify my advice and the order of having quashed the earlier appointment made by them.

After hearing all parties, which included the Government of India, the Court upheld the proposed transparent scheme made by the LG office. The two judges bench averred that they found no fault in the recruitment plan with the due concurrence of the Union Home Ministry. The selection is to be made by a committee headed by Chief Secretary with two independent members. One from Union Home Ministry and the other from Panchayat Raj Ministry.

This judgment was yet another judicial loss for the Political establishment.

These judgments firmly reiterated the administrator's legal position as laid down by the Union Territory Act and the business rules. But the process caused a considerable amount of distraction and dismay amongst the people of Puducherry. They were constantly reading these legal battles daily on one count or the other.

For the media, it was increasing readership.

These were avoidable conflicts; It cost the population of Puducherry considerable distraction and angst. It kept public officials dislodged and in a dilemma. It equally cost the public exchequer money meant for welfare and development. It also kept the media hijacked. Instead of focussing on initiatives and changes, their news kept the conflicts in circulation. It spread negativity and gloom. It was a daily resolve to pump positive energy into all our endeavours.

Good News is - we succeeded!!



Letter to the CS, which straightened the system

(from pre page)

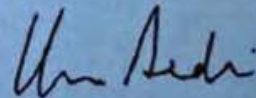
No. 144/LGS/2019
Lt. Governor's Secretariat

271. This was discussed with Chief Secretary today (04/07/2019).

272. The eligibility to apply for the post of State Election Commissioner will be as follows:-

"State Election Commissioner shall be appointed from amongst persons, who served under the Government of Union, or under the Government of a State or Union territory for not less than twenty-five years, having knowledge and experience in conducting elections".

271. Accordingly applications be called for from eligible persons through open advertisement.



(Dr. Kiran Bedi)
Lieutenant Governor

4. 7. 2019.

Chief Secretary

CHAPTER 44

BATTLING COVID-19



Covid was a period of nightmares. It took us several months of the ordeal to discern that this was a non-sparing pandemic.

When and how do we surmount it? Would it ever go? It was terrifying. At times we felt unprotected. The wolf was outside every door.

Before Covid-19 hit us, the senior fraternity of doctors was divided into unions and associations, each competing for many reasons, primarily on personnel, namely promotions, postings, seniority, and grades. Many of their matters were long stagnant. Those on contract sulked due to delayed and inadequate financials. Appointments were arbitrary under suffocating control.

The government institutions were headless and further divided into loyalties. Vested interests ensured that they remained disunited, deficit and dependent. Be it in their contracts, promotions, postings, or increments.

The administration of these institutions was callous. Premises were dirty and ill-equipped, and poorly maintained even on the minimum basics. For instance, the dental college had broken chairs, choked washbasins, and crooked instruments. The Government Medical college did not have its elevator functioning or emergency power backups for oxygen supplies.

The Government facilities had artificial shortages of medicines and personal equipment because the purchases had to be made only from one particular source. They had severe integrity issues besides being starved of funds. There was a lack of trust. Internal or external collaborations of any form of sharing were anathema for those at the helm. Communications was not a priority, barring exceptions.

Many doctors preferred postings in the dispensaries. They could report by 8:00 am (hopefully), leave a little before 2:00 pm, and then go to their private practice, which was permitted. They enjoyed this dual privilege. The practitioners had to be on the right side of powers to continue at the pleasure of the controllers. There were no personnel policies.

The dispensaries' locations were good but lacked computerisation of data - not even an excel sheet of medicines dispersed to be tracked and audited. Records were on poorly kept open registers.

The appointed doctors in the dispensaries and the female paramedic staff managed to keep the immunisation targets and schedules for women and children, substantially aided by centrally sponsored schemes of the Government of India, to meet the distinct needs of women and children.

There was no policy on internships and community service. The medical education culture in Puducherry was primarily mercenary, not service. Despite considerable subsidising of their student fees made out of Puducherry health budget.

The private medical colleges' mafia was prevalent in cornering medical seats. It took a protracted and expensive legal battle of interventions to get justice for the eligible prospective medical students of Puducherry and any other qualified and deserving.

The Covid-19 Pandemic struck Puducherry against this scenario of medical services. The health department was ill-equipped and ill-prepared, particularly human resource management and leadership. As the virus got virulent, few started to think seriously of quitting. Some even did, and others managed to secure leave.

According to the Disaster Management Act of Puducherry, the Chief Minister is the Chairman of the State Committee on policymaking. Regrettably, he took the time to address the gravity of the pandemic. He also had many vested interests to appease.

The *political classes publicly violated appropriate covid social distancing behaviour by holding back to back agitations.



The Ministers held meetings in closed-door air-conditioned rooms against Covid guidelines. They encouraged people to gather outside their houses to receive goodies. They rarely wore masks breaking the Covid protocols, setting a bad example.

The worst was demonstrations and agitations when the police force was overstretched to enforce Covid protocol. Few MLAs even came under prosecution. Even at the peak of the spread of Covid, efforts were made to divert attention and weaken the combined efforts of fighting back the pandemic.



The cooperation of the people continued to weaken, despite repeated messaging. Only a few followed; many resisted. They overstayed at home, suppressing fever to avoid hospitalisation, avoiding treatment, and becoming super spreaders. Many delayed medical aid despite being aware of their co-morbidities. They resisted contact tracing, were non-cooperative even to give information lest they get quarantined. But they were expecting the Government to solve all their problems.



Newspaper Clipping – The Hindu

The Covid infected influential went to Tamil Nadu and other expensive private hospitals for treatment. In contrast, the others lined up outside government facilities in Puducherry, which took a long time to be duly equipped to deal with the growing challenge. Patients also did not heed lawful directions in the medical care facilities following Covid appropriate behaviour. Some regulars on alcohol would sneak out of hospitals and quarantined areas. Hence, it kept spreading the infection.

Quarantines at home in small rooms led to increased infection within families. Containment zones, too, were more in breach. Enforcement was becoming a nightmare, leaving the medical agencies exhausted and at increased risk.

We distributed free food grains to the eligible at their doorstep during the lockdown. It was a strenuous exercise for the public officials. The aid in-kind and direct transfer of funds to farmers and others from the Government of India was prompt and helped.

Aggrieved people sent WhatsApp messages crying for medical help. I also received direct emails marked confidential, updating me on the ground situation.

The 'Prosperous Puducherry' WhatsApp groups formed and used during easier times kept us abreast of ground realities.

In Covid care, the demands were far outstripping capacity in medical care; the doctors were feeling the heat of overwork. They were initially very short of personal protective equipment, testing kits, labs for early test reports, sanitisers and medical masks.

They were not organised in WhatsApp groups as one network during regular times. The political establishment did not favour their working together, and now the chickens were coming home to roost.

The Covid challenge was mounting by the day. The answer lay in increased testing, contact tracing, surveillance, data management, proper treatment, appropriate covid behaviour and collaboration.

But it was disjointed, lacking professional and political leadership - most of all, the will and the determination. The Disaster Management Act squarely placed the CM in the lead in such a disaster. Any concerns or intervention from the LG office were considered an 'interference', expecting the LG office to be a mere bystander.

The health department had not set up an essential command centre requirement to collate and analyse daily. The then Health Minister obstructed it. Instead, just one small desk did data collection only to feed statistics for the central command in Delhi. Tragically they did not share this data with JIPMER, akin to an AIIMS of the South, located in Puducherry. The attitude of working in isolation and competitively was kept alive even in times of crisis.

I had to 'order' the health secretary to share the data password with JIPMER. When asked why the department had not shared it so far, the senior doctor said he was instructed not to share.

Meanwhile, the Chief Secretary continued his evening briefings sharing the updates received from the Government of India with Secretaries of concerned departments; namely, Health, Food and Civil Supplies, Labour, Industries, Tourism, Public Works Department, Local Administration, Social welfare, the DGP, the Collectors, the Administrators of regions.

Circumstances now compelled the cooption of JIPMER, the General Hospital and the Indira Gandhi Medical College. Important decisions taken in this group were seen getting diluted in CM's Disaster Management group meetings. The minutes of such crucial meetings

would not get circulated for days. Hence, while managing this crisis, I found we were going two steps forward and three steps back.

A stage came when the Health Secretary threw up his hands and proceeded on leave, giving ‘TENSION’ as the reason. Cases were spiralling, people were in a panic, and our medical infrastructure was crumbling. Doctors, too, were worried, with few fearing their safety. They were getting exhausted. They had no planned reserves. But they remained disunited and unsupported by the private medical colleges, the nursing colleges and other paramedics.

The Tipping Point of COVID-19



The Control Room Finally Set Up

As I look back, month-wise, we learnt as we suffered, quite visible in the timelines of the Covid challenge.

March 2020

No Covid cases were reported during this period.

We went into ‘Janta curfew’ as announced by the Prime Minister, managing twenty-one days of lockdown, spreading mass awareness

to people for complying with Covid Protocol for social distancing, hand sanitising, and wearing a face mask.

We provided protective gear to sanitation staff, buses to commute, and a community hall for their board and lodging to ensure their availability, as city cleanliness was critical.



Swachhta Workers



Swachhta Workers in a Bus

April 2020

Medical Bulletin

Month	Case tested	Positive	Percentage	Home Quarantine	Hospital	Death
April 11.4.2020	1474	8	0.55	Nil	8	1

An MLA was booked as he violated the 3 S norm of COVID appropriate behaviour. To bolster law enforcement presence, Puducherry Police co-opted private security and NCC cadets in helping enforce social distancing. Open grounds such as bus stands were converted into vegetable markets to decongest. The Civil supplies department distributed food grains made available from the Food Corporation of India (FCI) to eligible families; the Traffic police ensured the smooth movement of commercial vehicles, and medical teams initiated Covid testing in suspect cases arriving from outside Puducherry.

During this lockdown period, twenty-four liquor licenses were suspended for selling liquor stealthily from back-doors expected to be sealed. It only indicated the connivance of excise officials, the sellers and the buyers. Transfers and arrests followed. We recommended the case to the CBI for further investigations and prosecution, much to the fury of the political establishment.

This decision led to the sealing of eighty-six entry points from neighbouring Tamil Nadu to check liquor smuggling. It posed an additional burden of surveillance on the local police.

The Chief Secretary held daily comprehensive briefings with all concerned departments to update instructions received from the Central Government.

May 2020

Medical Bulletin

Month	Case tested	Positive	Percentage	Home Quarantine	Hospital	Death
May	4902	62	1.27	Nil	62	0

The lockdown got extended by two weeks. Free foodgrains distribution continued during this period. The police fined over 6573 persons who were lax in observing the 3S behaviour for not wearing masks.

The police registered 236 FIRs of the illegal liquor sale, and the Excise Commissioner cancelled 100 liquor shop licenses. It was an added strain on the police. But firm messaging to the black marketeers.

The Government calibrated liquor policy to dissuade buyers from the red zones of neighbouring places. The Covid Team initiated contact tracing of reported positive cases. The Migrants became uneasy and wanted to return. The Collector organised special arrangements for their safe departure. He also facilitated online clearance for Covid related issues.

June 2020

Medical Bulletin

Month	Case tested	Positive	Percentage	Home Quarantine	Hospital	Death
Jun	10026	644	6.43	Nil	644	12

My daily briefings with the Chief Secretary and the rest of the team became virtual, co-opting Director JIPMER, Collector Karaikal and Regional Administrators of Yanam and Mahe. In this briefing, the CS duly updated all officials on the latest instructions from the Government of India and the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).

Cases continued to soar. Testing facilities were grossly inadequate. Contact tracing by medical teams was still not commensurate. Teachers were reluctant to be in the field.

The Chief Secretary held a meeting with the doctors, explaining the need to get involved. It had no positive outcome. The Collector decongested a fish market, reported to be a super spreader.



The political class continued to violate the Covid protocols by organising agitations despite appeals. They were being difficult for law enforcement. Additional officers moved in to strengthen coordination implementation, messaging, enforcement, and supervision.

The worst was when political classes planned an uproar against the LG office for all the proactive and preventive measures afoot to combat Covid. This class of people considered my support and help in mobilising interventions as ‘interference in their work’. It is a mystery what did they want when people were suffering.

Meanwhile, cases kept increasing, with hospitals and Covid centres running out of beds. There was a severe shortage of medicines, doctors, nurses, and protective equipment.

The situation became grimmer by the day. Everyday deaths increased, and there was a growing sense of anguish. The Health Secretary himself proceeded on medical leave.

July 2020

Medical Bulletin

Month	Case tested	Positive	Percentage	Home Quarantine	Hospital	Death
Jul	22426	2764	12.32	213 From 23.07.2020	1325	37

The projections on the Covid scenario made by Dr. Rakesh Aggarwal, Director JIPMER, were alarming. The message for all was evident, protect yourself and protect others too.

One in five was affected already and roamed around without knowing they had Covid. The facilities created by the department were not matching the need. The medical fraternity ultimately conceded to my call for setting up the much-needed control rooms to share data and work together. Despite the attempted sabotage by the Health Minister, Dr. Soumya Swaminathan, Chief Scientist of World Health Organisation (WHO), visited us.



Dr. S. Swaminathan, Chief Scientist, WHO

The control room finally strung together the public health centres (PHCs), also called dispensaries. Earlier, they were resistant to any collaboration and oversight from the LG office or even being part of a united WhatsApp group formed. Pankaj Jha, the officer appointed to lead the common centre, most ably facilitated it.

But it was still not enough to check the increase in cases and fatalities. The situation was becoming graver by the hour.

August 2020

Medical Bulletin

Month	Case tested	Positive	Percentage	Home Quarantine	Hospital	Death
Aug	36717	109691	29.68	4303	6658	178

Compared to July, positive cases detected were 2764 whereas, in August, it became 109691. (due to an increase in testing.)

There were 178 deaths in August compared to only 37 in July. 6658 were hospitalised compared to only 135 of July.

With 4303 were in the home Quarantine.

There was panic all around in Puducherry. The virus had spread deep into the community; Our existing resources were also depleted. We had failed to control it despite our efforts. The situation needed experienced and scientific expert interventions to check the worsening in prevention, detection, treatment, and training.

The CM had still not directed the co-option of private medical colleges under the legal provisions of the Disaster Management Act; these institutions continued to evade their ethical and professional responsibility of making available their resources in this crisis. People were dying.

It became a Tipping Point. I appealed for help. It was not the time for formal letters. I used the Twitter handle to send an SOS tagging the PMO, The UHM and UHS.



Help arrived. To strengthen it further, I reached out to the Government of India for more.

Now the ICMR, Indian Council for Medical Research, stepped in. Three more eminent scientists from the National Institute of

Epidemiology (NIE) Chennai were rushed to Puducherry. Scientists Dr. Manoj V Murhekar, Dr. P Ganesh Kumar, Dr. M Nesan, and Dr. Prabhdeep Kaur got on the task immediately and camped in Puducherry.



Dr. Prabhdeep Kaur, NIE Chennai

They updated us on the grim analysis of the current situation. The team put in place ‘Seven Pillars’ under a senior doctor in the areas of Surveillance, Active and Passive, Testing, Contact Tracing, Isolation, Home Quarantine, Bed Occupancy, Data management, Data-driven decisions, and Capacity Building.

The team stayed on, monitoring, evaluating, auditing and training. The experts filled in what we lacked- medical expertise in this field. They covered Karaikal, Mahe and Yanam. They brought in much-needed coordination and alignment. No one could dilute their work.

Most of all, they unified.

Now no one dared to break this. The ICMR experts directly supervised the doctors’ performance and guided them daily.



Dr. Prabhdeep Kaur at Training Session

To meet the challenge of enhanced coordination, we appointed Shri A Anbarasu as Commissioner Relief and Rehabilitation to work closely with Dr. T Arun, Secretary of Health and the medical fraternity. There was no scope for any excuse now as the matter had reached the PMO. The private medical colleges came on board, finally.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Home affairs sought a daily report on the progress made. It placed all on notice.

Daily, we posted in the public domain how Covid was being addressed. It made people feel co-opted. Information poured in, and we were resolving. We tracked every grievance closely through the efficient control room we had created. We left nothing to chance anymore.

The officials let the vested interest cry foul, but there was no time to waste. Suffering had to go. I did a daily afternoon fixed time review with the Relief Commissioner, Health Secretary, DMS, Dr. Mohan, Special Secretary, Relief and Rehabilitation and Coordinating Control Room, and co-opting ICMR doctors on a need basis.

They were part of the afternoon briefing team. WhatsApp groups of doctors were aptly named ‘United Services’. All grievances and suggestions received from many sources were posted here and addressed.

Law enforcement also gained significant momentum despite political delays in approving the file on prosecutions, which empowered the police more. Till then, we used other social and legal measures. Most of all, the educative measures.



Beat Officers walked through the markets, reminding people of the 3S. The LG office grievances desk daily asked for the number of prosecutions made by all. We named and shamed and applauded. The same was for the public health centres. Field staff was tasked with the number of contacts traced. The mobile teams proactively conducted Fever and Covid tests and ensured time-bound reports.



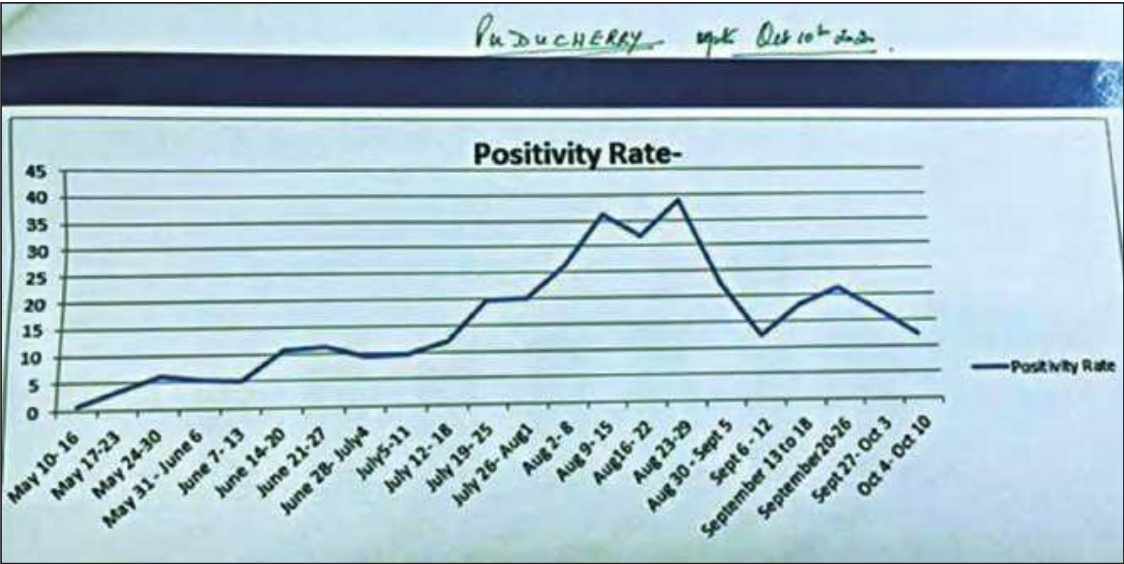
Scan QR for Photos, Videos & Others



Year 2020-2021 Covid Management Report

Month	Case tested	Positive	Percentage	Home Quarantine	Hospital	Death
Apr 11.4.2020	1474	8	0.55	Nil	8	1
May	4902	62	1.27	Nil	62	0
Jun	10026	644	6.43	Nil	644	12
Jul	22426	2764	12.32	213 From 23.07.2020	1325	37
Aug	36717	109691	29.68	4303	6658	178
AFTER GOI INTERVENTION						
Sep	4938	491	9.94	131	360	4
Oct	3178	105	3.3	36	69	0
Nov	2076	33	1.59	12	12	1
Dec	3118	36	1.15	1	35	0
Jan-2021	2352	21	0.89	6	15	1

Year 2020-2021 Covid Management Graph



VI

**Against
All Odds &
Despite
All Odds**

MARCHING FORWARD-2016

'CM MARKING TIME'



With each passing day, the political establishment was becoming indifferent. While we were inviting them for all possible cooption, I found them avoiding calls for joint inspections.

This class of people probably hoped I would wait for them or cancel my visits, which was not the case.

Team Raj Nivas and the concerned officers, mainly middle level, would always be on site. They were exceedingly appreciative. There was no question of cancellations or postponements. It was about honouring the commitment as these requests were directly from the

people through grievances received in the open house, police control room or emails.

We were on track - all municipal, education, health care, admissions, land encroachments, crimes against women, traffic woes, and other issues were addressed parallel.

I overcame the language barrier as I had with me two competent officers to help me communicate. We converted Raj Nivas into a 'Seva Nivas'. There was an overwhelming feeling of assurance in seeing their last court of appeal open every day with follow-up processes in place. We now co-opted the Lok Adalat for several issues, which relieved grievance redressal.

After 6:00 pm, it was time to clear office files with my Secretary, Mr. G. Theva Neethi Dhas. Having served in most of the positions in Puducherry Administrative Service, he knew the matters - inside out. Each file was of value. Some involved a tough policy call, while other long-standing issues awaited clearance.

Some files turned out to be several years old, adding to the legacy. We cleared files with objectivity and equity, keeping in mind the significant interest of the Union Territory and its people.

Many evenings, our meetings continued till late after dinner. The concerned officers also joined us for dinner and post-dinner discussions.



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‘CM MARKING TIME’

GUV’S POPULARITY FAILS TO GO WELL WITH LEADERS

THE TIMES OF INDIA JUNE 22, 2016

The media was commenting that the HCM had been ‘parachuted’ from New Delhi to counter me and keep me under check.

I observed that the HCM was lying low and not coming out openly against several initiatives we undertook during this period. He was reported to be sulking but said nothing. Perhaps he had an election to win still.

People were getting well served. And his making any open statement against those improvements may be politically incorrect.

Raj Nivas had opened up to the ordinary person and resolved issues with collaborative creativity. The HCM was bearing it.

His junior minister, at times, was the one speaking out of turn during this period. He maintained silence.

The By-Election was held. He got formally elected in late November of 2016.

Soon after the election, I saw a distinct change coming about in his behaviour.

He started to prop up his junior minister to make unreasonable demands on me. Such as, I ought to go to New Delhi, use my clout (if any) to get money for the UT.

The CS remained uncooperative and played a negative role in checking on me. For instance, on assuming charge as the Lt. Governor, I made the first call on the Honorable Prime Minister, Union Home

Minister and several other Union Ministers, including the Union Railway Minister, for a Shatabdi connect between Puducherry and Chennai.

He did not let me make any valuable achievements and effective decisions public. He obstructed me from getting a message sent through the Chief Secretary that there was no need. It was an apparent loss of information to the people of Puducherry. I chose not to make an issue of it at that time.

He attempted to keep me in check through his junior ministers and the Chief Secretary.

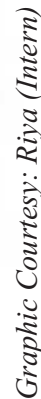
He was marking time. At the same time, we were gaining momentum in all directions. He was coming into his own to check and counter me.



Scan QR for News Clips

MARCHING FORWARD-2017

AN INCENSED CHIEF MINISTER



Added Initiatives during this period: Jan- Dec 2017

Evident from the hive above, we continued the work practices of the last six months and added further amidst simmering political challenges.

I was ‘sabotaged’ in using social media for internal communication, but I overruled that order and continued making the best use of ‘Prosperous Puducherry’ and other WhatsApp groups.

The Chief Secretary, under political pressure, transferred an honest municipal commissioner despite my written orders not to.

The CM continued to issue blatant directives to the bureaucrats to not cooperate in any of my transformative initiatives.

The politicians went on a Dharna against the emerging improvements. I was cartooned and lampooned. The Cabinet called on the 'Powers that Be' in New Delhi, urging my recall. The Government of India, on the contrary, sent a clarification on the powers of the LG, reaffirming my administrative remit.

I appointed the nominated MLAs during this period despite the opposition, including the Chief Secretary, playing a dubious role. The Raj Nivas included daily visiting hours. We dedicated the afternoon time for tourists to see the historic Raj Nivas. We conducted film series for children, invited eminent speakers for lectures on leadership, added Lok Adalat to our Open house, and set up a Raj Nivas website for grievance redressal. We even conducted blood donation camps, donating blood myself.

While we were out in the field, we continued to work on Swachhta and encouraged the revival of water bodies, including lakes, ponds and temple ponds, involving the community. The beach revival project was also initiated.

This year, we addressed 13075 public complaints, of which 5762 came through the open house, 5692 came either through email, website, or social media, and 1632 came through WhatsApp.

We initiated police training programs, made helmets compulsory, and attempted to reform the Kalapet prison in Puducherry. We went after the rowdies, land grabbers, sand mining mafia, and extorters on the law-and-order front.

We continued to ensure financial prudence by helping officers get their provident funds almost lost in the diversion. We barred VIPs from flying business class and directed recoveries from defaulters.

One colossal challenge which came our way during this period was the legacy of cronyism in medical admissions and exorbitant fees charged by Private Medical colleges. We took this prevailing evil head-on. The

Courts delivered justice by directing the capping of the fee. On the other hand, CBI started to probe into the malfunctioning done by two IAS officers and 11 other public officials. Five of them surrendered before the court.



AN INCENSED CHIEF MINISTER

CM CHALLENGES BEDI TO ORDER PROBE INTO 'IRREGULARITIES'

DECCAN CHRONICLE

While the public officials in the administration were struggling to improve the functioning of the Government machinery, the Honourable Chief Minister started to create discord.

These were his on-record statements, not denied by him.

- *He was directing the Finance Secretary not to attend Lt. Governor's meetings.*
- *Writing against me to Union Minister on the changes happening. Writing to me not to conduct phone conferences with officers.*
- *Writing to me not to conduct a fortnightly review meeting with Secretary, Finance. Also, not to use social media networking groups, emails, SMS, banning them all.*
- *Objecting to my meeting with the officers to seek any clarifications.*
- *Questioning why Raj Nivas was receiving the petitions and the Open House functioning.*
- *Objecting to my field visits in writing.*
- *Stating on the files' "there is no need for it" when asked for any presentation.*

Against this background, I wrote an Open Letter to the people of Puducherry (an extract.)

“This UT has an elected State Assembly which has legislative powers to legislate as per the State and Concurrent list. I am happy to support them if the law does not conflict with a Central Law.

It is my responsibility under the law.

On several other matters, absolute powers in areas of Finance or Service matters, or Policy matters, the final responsibility rests with me.

I am fully accountable.

I enjoy no immunity as an LG. While State LGs do so. It is because I am also the Administrator of this UT.

I have tried to fulfil my responsibilities with the utmost sense of responsibility in the last few months.

I have ensured fairness and financial prudence as expected from my position. I have promoted Rule of Law, as you may have observed.

In my eyes, all are equal before the law howsoever mighty they may be.

I have brought about strong coordination amongst all ranks and all departments. I have more plans to strengthen it.

I have tried to mentor and groom, and inspire public officials to do their duties in a better way.

I opened the Raj Niwas to ordinary persons and initiated public grievance redressal systems to get their long-standing problems sorted out.

Raj Nivas is not a post office but a decisive office.

I have spent all my mornings over the weekends visiting problem areas to bring about solutions. And we succeeded.

My approach was not to punish but help perform, inspire and support.

I have exercised financial prudence and have not allowed any diversion of funds. Despite this, I have had complaints of abuse.

Public money must get deployed where most needed.

I have wanted a good balance between urban and rural budgeting, which heavily favours urban amenities only.

Therefore, I want to tell you that I shall ensure the integrity and the rule of law without fear or favour if I am responsible for working here.

I will strive to leave Puducherry clean, safe, and prosperous.

Yours Truly

Kiran

None of this made any difference to the Chief Minister.

He kept challenging the Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, despite being conveyed in writing that the LG - the Administrator was within her responsibilities in doing what she was doing.

His interview on a *TV channel revealed his anger at the changes happening in the administration of the UT.

Points of my Letter to CM

- *Work culture and coordination are absent amongst the senior-most bureaucratic levels, both within departments and interdepartmental.*
- *Absence of field visits by seniors.*
- *There was no sharing of tour reports or pre and post-tour briefings. No one knew who was going, where and why, and the outcomes.*
- *No system of institutional memory.*
- *Seniors were leaving for tours without prior intimation to the LG office. No practice of recording minutes of meetings held and sharing them inter-departmentally.*
- *Inadequate audits, timely reviews, completion, loans taken, and interest paid - accounts of many unfinished, unoccupied or unused buildings.*
- *Programs on upgrading professional skills are non-existent.*
- *Weak implementation of centrally sponsored schemes in the last financial year.*
- *A total absence of mandatory monthly reviews and inspections across the departments. There are several overlaps without coordination. Officers have admitted this as a significant deficiency in our administration.*
- *They were not taking up matters on an urgent basis when they needed clarity and coordinated resolution.*

I did not receive any response to any of my concerns.

Scan QR for Full interview in *QR Code

Early on, the cabinet members wanted to have a meeting. I sent my concurrence with a request and offered some key points for consideration, such as the precarious financial situation of the Union Territory, the failed public sector undertakings, major cooperative societies adding to financial bankruptcy, idling expensive projects constructed with foreign loans and more. In addition to this, I raised my concern regarding the exceedingly slow pace of the construction of household toilets, with only 1400 built against a target of 55,000, just a few months away to honour the commitment to the PMO.

I heard nothing. Undeterred, I kept up my work.

During this period, Puducherry was visited by Honourable Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah. He publically declared that the Congress government in Puducherry was most corrupt.

**CONGRESS GOVERNMENT IN PUDUCHERRY MOST CORRUPT,
SAYS AMIT SHAH** BY:PTI | PUDUCHERRY | JUNE 26, 2017 11:51 PM



CHAPTER 47

MARCHING FORWARD-2018 'CM'S SATURDAY FEVER'



Graphic Courtesy: Riya (Intern)

Added Initiatives for this period: Jan- Dec 2018

We continued to drive the change in all directions and all areas. The more we saw, the more we improved and corrected.

I recall a morning round when Team Raj Nivas and Public officials of key departments drove down in a bus to a self-sustaining village of intellectually challenged people called Sristi. It was a success story of achieving against the odds.

Our internal networking improved considerably. I added another initiative into my daily schedule, which was to meet officers at 9:00 am every morning on a one-on-one basis.

In my revisits to schools, I saw a marked improvement in learning skills, for which we rewarded the children. Now skills training was introduced in schools as part of the Government of India's centrally sponsored scheme. We revisited the sports infrastructure and found out what more we needed to do. We opened a helpline and a control room for them to report any deficiency.

We got a health card for all our 1500 Sanitary/Swachhta workers. Many hospitals led by JIPMER volunteered to do so. We were progressing towards the declaration of Puducherry as an open defecation territory as a part of the Swachh Bharat Movement.

We celebrated women's day with weeklong cycle rallies, invited the women cops to join in, and held women sports meet first.

We remained very proactive on water harvesting. We did awareness cycle rallies to Kangan lake and other water tanks and organised joint visits with ministers and opposition members to help bring togetherness in the water harvesting drive. We went to water-guzzling industries and water-starved residential areas, such as the Tsunami quarters, dependent on expensive water tankers for their daily needs. We inspected their water harvesting infrastructure and found it either missing or seriously deficient.

We sealed tube wells unauthorised to extract groundwater and prohibited digging more tube wells in violation of water policy. Our visits embarrassed them on their negligent attitude. We inspired industries to adopt water channels and build their water harvesting pits on the premises.

It helped recover sums of money just by initiating a survey. People came begging for time.

We barred business travels of the officials as we were in need to save money for salaries.

We did sessions with the French citizens to address their problems. To improve inter-department communication, we introduced audio

conferencing with secretaries and urged departments to publish their training calendars. A probe was ordered into misuse of funds by a legislator. He produced fake bills to fill diesel in his vehicle. On financial integrity, we took charge of Grant-in-Aid. We restricted the free rice scheme to BPL. And to raise our revenue, we decided to auction defaulters' assets to recover Rs. 151.81 crores that was due to the Government from 10 Petrol bunks.

Puducherry Traders Association detected that only 3,000 shops had a trade license against 15,000 business shops which ought to have had. A central showroom was functioning without permission. We sealed it. The information about this came through an alert of the market association residents.

Despite the HCM calling up the bureaucrats not to carry out my instructions or attend review meetings at the Raj Nivas, all this work went on. He was declaring all the steps taken to correct the system as unconstitutional. He even hauled up senior traffic police officers for enforcing helmet rules.

He alleged corruption in our water harvesting CSR support raised even though there was no financial transaction between us. They dealt directly with the contractors.

The Honourable CM wanted the channel work auctioned, despite no money in its budget. By the time, the monsoons would have come and gone. I wondered what kind of people representatives we got? Perhaps as we deserved?

I reminded the HCM of pending elections of the hundreds of cooperative societies and the local body elections not held for decades, to not much avail. However, I saw it did not suit them to touch a hornets' nest.

Instead, an all-party delegation called on PM/President asking for my removal and demanding Statehood for Puducherry.

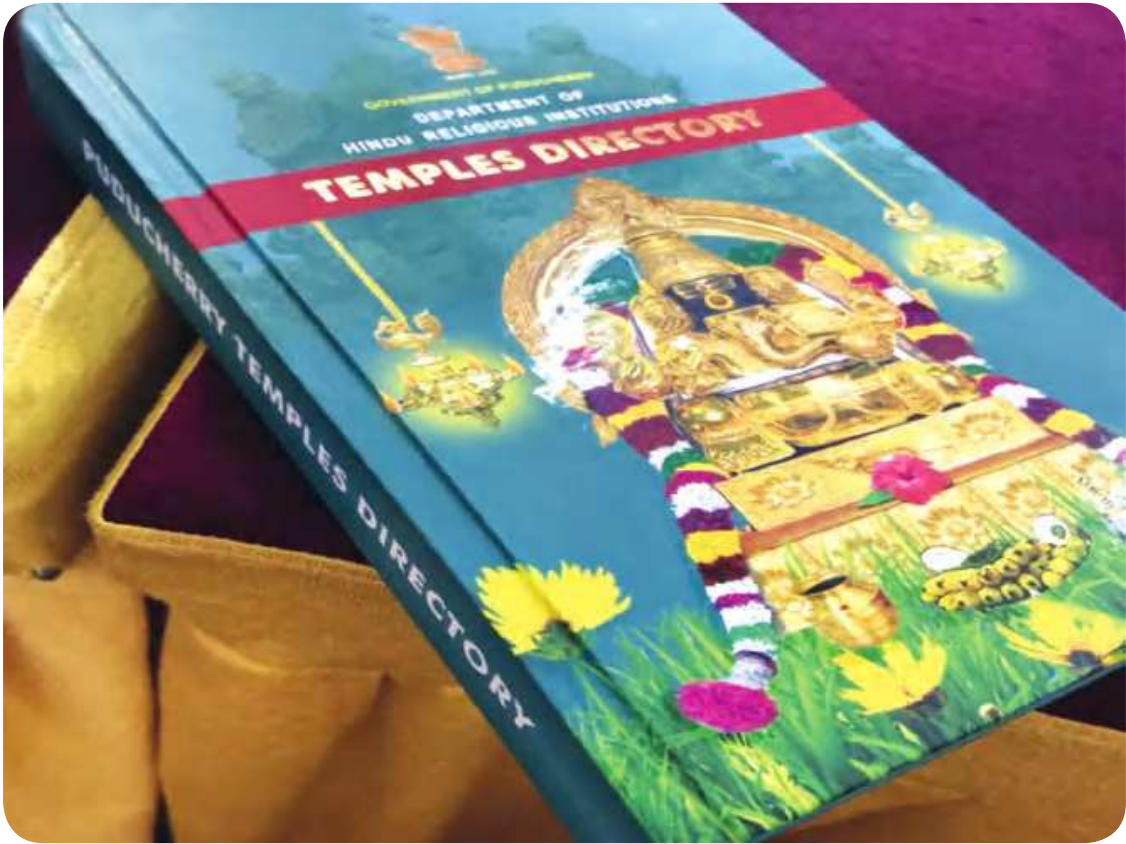
I requested the Union Home Ministry to audit the finances of the UT, saying the Union Territory needs it from time to time to social audit and keep track of financial management of the UT.

We released the two publications, 'Tracking of the News', May 2016-18. A compilation of essential news of this period as a ready reckoner. Both in English and Tamil languages. The other was the first-ever Temple Directory. Both these publications were in great demand, and they were an authentic source of information.



Scan QR for Videos

Temples Directory of Puducherry



'CM'S SATURDAY FEVER'



The systems were getting fine-tuned by the day. There was an increasing consciousness towards better administration.

Public officials were more responsive and collaborative. Volunteerism was spreading. The secretariat was in sound hands with the new Chief Secretary in position. Earlier one was replaced on request.

But the Chief Minister, in his weekly Saturday press conferences, made statements that spread bitterness. Instead of strengthening the progress, he traded misinformation bordering on telling lies and being fully aware of the collective efforts behind these improvements.

As a people's representative, he could have been pleased over the transformation, as people were reportedly getting better served.

But the HCM was ranting. Instead of collaborating, he advocated alienation, which meant more work for public officials to undo the antagonism?

I responded only selectively to these, even to the extent of requesting the Hon'ble Chief Minister to join me for a lie-detector test. I couldn't do more. Since he was the people's elected representative, only people could hold him accountable. At the same time, I was an appointee from the Government of India, expected to deal with these internal matters as per the law.

The ‘Saturday Fever’ of the Hon’ble Chief Minister’s pressers left behind a sense of edginess and instability amongst people and public officials.

Some uncorroborated statements made by the HCM in 2018 have been chronologically listed, with none refuted. (2018)

*“LG does not have the right to interfere in day-to-day government.”
January 3, 2018 (Deccan Chronicle)*

*“Lieutenant Governor’s review meetings unconstitutional”
January 25, 2018 (The Hindu)*

“Demand her recall” MAY 1, 2018 (The Hindu)

*“Officers should seek his advice before executing LG’s orders.”
(The Times of India)*

“All public officials to consult ministers before acting on LG’s advice.” (The Hindu)

*“All communications from the centre must reach him first”.
JUNE 12, 2018 (The New Indian Express)*

*“Bedi creating obstacles in implementing schemes”. JUNE 16,
2018 (The Hindu)*

*“Will take the ball to PM’s court over Bedi’s style of functioning.”
JUNE 27, 2018 (The New Indian Express)*

“Centre is abusing its powers” – JUNE 27, 2018 (The Time of India)

“Ignore LG’s instructions ...” August 6, 2018 (The Hindu)

“Officials Need not Listen to Bedi’s Words” (The New Indian Express)

“Bedi has no special powers to act”(Deccan Chronicle)

“LG cannot issue direction to enforce helmet rule” August 15, 2018 (The New Indian Express)

“LG Misusing power” October 14, 2018 (The New Indian Express)

“Raj Nivas of indulging in irregularities” October 16, 2018 (The New Indian Express)

“Himalayan Scam” October 20, 2018 (The Times of India)

“Police not to heed LG’s oral instructions” December 20, 2018 (The Hindu)

Additionally, the allegations were made by him in his letters.

12th Mar: ‘Why I have gone on a field visit.’

22nd MAR: ‘Why have I asked the vigilance officer to report on vigilance matters

8th APR: ‘Questioning the rules of business.’

12th APR: ‘Why am I briefing officers...’. ‘I have no right to review’ referring to my 10:00 am briefings.

I put up with his boorish behaviour to keep the administration going. Some of us were hoping against hope that the CM would see reason and place the interest of the people of Puducherry above personal issues.



CHAPTER 48

MARCHING FORWARD-2019 BITTER CHIEF MINISTER



Added Initiatives During this Period: Jan- Dec 2019

We continued to strengthen earlier initiatives, highlighted in past hives irrespective of distractions of agitations, dharnas or the hostility and threats from the political establishment.

The credit for this improved work culture amongst public officials could be attributed to the able leadership of the Chief Secretary, Mr. Ashwani Kumar, IAS.

The secretariat refused to splurge public money and stuck to notified schemes and budgeted funds. By this time, salaries, pensions, and other benefits were disbursed within time.

We kept up our publications going and placed them in the public domain for people to enjoy a sense of ownership.

Raj Nivas did not miss any occasion to involve the people making the difference. We increased our attention to making Puducherry Water Rich and added Mission Green Puducherry. The spirit of volunteerism increased substantially. They took over the relay. Corporate social responsibility stepped in to clean up the irrigation canals and clogged drains.

The temple priests took responsibility for their temple ponds, with devotees contributing.

We heightened the integrity grip by referring alleged corruption matters to the vigilance department. The CBI opened its office in Puducherry, a request accepted by the Government of India. It sent a powerful message.

Focus on upskilling was brought about. For the first time, an all-in charge of Police stations went through an in-house test by doing their self SWOT. We empowered all our beat police officers to form a WhatsApp group, where they could share their sense of accomplishment of the day, seen and acknowledged by seniors. The whole department became aligned.

Shri Balaji Srivastava, the Director-General of Police, was directly connected with rank and file.

Raj Nivas hosted the first-ever internship program for young graduates using the lean time of no-activity during the model code of conduct set in for a Parliament seat in Puducherry. While there were various legal challenges, the political establishment took us to the honourable courts, making headlines.



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BITTER CHIEF MINISTER**NOW, CM CALLS BEDI 'ADOLF HITLER'S SISTER'**

THE TIMES OF INDIA NOV. 20, 2019

The year 2019 saw the office of Lt. Governor legally challenged to the maximum by the HCM. It was a make or break situation in the legal position of the Administrator.

The Team Raj Nivas did not doubt the lawful strength the position had, nor the Government of India or the Union Home Ministry, to be specific. However, attempts were to throw us off gear with the interpretations by those desperate to cause imbalance or cast a shadow on our work. They were hoping for this small team to relent and give up.

The HCM and one of his ministers, in particular, were most desperate on being severely hit by our very close scrutiny of all his pending financial projects. He was desperate to secure the ill-gotten wealth by browbeating us.

The HCM searched for any legal peg to drive the LG Office towards action for the most apparent reasons. We were equally determined to assert the legal boundaries of this position.

Reasons were financial all the way, be it free rice distribution, with purchases made from their contractors and distributed to those above the poverty line.

We were very clear in making direct fund transfers and distributing rice to only the poor. Other reasons were hugely inflated project costs in flood relief, the festival goodies not budgeted, the recruitments,

violations of rules, land sales, grants-in-aid for no work, and more. The less said, the better.

Every time the matter was questioned, it hit some 'pockets'. They cried foul.

They challenged, ranted, abused, lied, called me names- sought my recall. The CM threatened contempt, bad-mouthed, and reported against me to the Prime Minister. I had been cautioned by the same source for financial prudence in Puducherry when I knew nothing about it.

It was a war of principles. Do I allow a loot? The choice was never difficult.

He dragged us to the courts of law. It was a long see-saw. In the interim, whenever they got an opportunity, they hastened to clear the pending financial proposals. The impatience exposed their intentions; It gave us the proof to contain and restrain them. Nature helped us. We succeeded to secure the status quo just in time when the files stopped coming to me.

We saved the situation from decline.

The year 2019 saw Team Raj Nivas sweat it out by working endlessly to meet timelines for legal counsels. We had several midnight briefings with overworked legal counsels in Delhi.

The Government of India also fully understood the gravity and urgency of the situation. They brought in the expertise and guidance of the current Solicitor General of India, Mr. Tushar Mehta.

On the other hand, the HCM kept threatening my office that if we legally challenged him, he would not allow any legal fees to be paid, which is why the Raj Nivas had to fend for itself from its existing budget.

During this period, the HCM continued to denigrate a constitutional position of LG with his statements.

CM'S STATEMENTS

'LG has no right to take any decisions'.

'LG does not deserve to be the incumbent of the gubernatorial post'.

'Signthe file or face consequences'.

'LG is hand in glove with PM Narendra Modi who has been creating problems for Non-BJP Governments; especially the Congress-led governments in other states'.

'No appeal can be preferred by Mrs. Bedi, Administrator of Puducherry, without the nod of the elected Government. She could go only on appeal in her capacity and not as LG'.

'Bedi's appeal in SC is irregular and illegal and will face contempt'.

'LG must not undertake inspections and convene meetings with the territorial officials to review various schemes'.

'Kiran Bedi is a woman without a conscience'.

When nothing was coming their way, and they were heading for an election for an MP seat, they decided to lay a siege to Raj Nivas.

A drama that they later regretted as having boomeranged.



CHAPTER 49

DHARNA DRAMA



Cabinet on Dharna Outside Raj Nivas

Smashing Helmets and taking out bike rallies, the political class also used this platform to clamour for 'Statehood for Puducherry', knowing well that being a Union Territory, Puducherry's legal status could not be changed, except by an Act of Parliament.

Over 400 of them took a train to Delhi to demonstrate at the Jantar Mantar, also called the Hyde Park of India. They agitated, saying, “No other LG has created trouble for a Government, like Bedi” and “the Lt. Governor was a BJP agent.” The Chief Minister even alleged that “5 Lt. Governors are functioning at Raj Nivas”, alluding to Team Raj Nivas.

They submitted a memorandum to the Centre saying, “Grant Statehood - Recall Lt. Governor”. They accused me of violating the oath of secrecy and that Prime Minister Narendra Modi should take note of this and remove me.

The HCM also accused me of not functioning in the interest and development of Puducherry. Overall, the protest initially intended to gather support for demanding long-pending full statehood of the Union Territory became a protest for my removal.

“It’s a protest that missed the mark. Instead of focusing on statehood, it became more of a call to the Union Govt. to recall the Lt. Governor”, said a legislator who was part of the 400 protestors.

They returned unheard. The political leaders decided to siege Raj Nivas with grim persistence and not give up. It was a dharna or a protest to my not replying to HCM’s letter by return post on a long list of demands he made. It was sad to see a Chief Minister expecting a return post on a letter he sent to the Lieutenant Governor.

Without waiting for a reply, the Chief Minister with his supporters surrounded the Raj Nivas. His demand was an instant reply to his three-page letter listing several issues with financial implications.

I wrote back to him, saying, "Instead of waiting for my response to the letter, you have come to Raj Nivas demanding a reply unlawfully. This method is unheard of by a person of your position. The issues you have raised in your letter need a thoughtful response. None of the cases are pending at Raj Nivas, as alleged by you. Besides, you never mentioned in your letter that unless you get a reply by return post, you and your colleagues would come and sit on a dharna outside my office."

The Chief Minister and his cabinet colleagues wearing black shirts and shawls led the indefinite protest in front of Raj Nivas. It was a lockdown for all of us at Raj Nivas as we could neither go out nor come back in without creating a law & order situation.

While sitting outside, they raised slogans, ‘Go back, Bedi’. The Chief Minister too hoisted black flags.

They all enjoyed their ‘biryani’ and left workers to sleep outside on the roads at night because mosquitoes were swarming over them.

Since Raj Nivas was blocked, I could not attend official or social engagements. Even essential staff could not enter. At night, a group played mournful tunes as if someone had passed away. All this was happening right under the nose of police leadership.

Instead of accepting my invitation to meet, the Chief Minister continued to make unfounded allegations and misled the people of Puducherry. Earlier, he criticised me for using social media; now, while on the Dharna, he turned into a hyperactive user. He used social media as a means of communication with the LG office. We became aware through notifications.

Meanwhile, the media had a field day in conjecturing and surmising the probable points of contention between the CM office and the LG.

They called it a ‘power struggle’ being at the heart of it.

Few points of contention, according to their writings:

- *CM did not want the LG to inquire about vigilance on some of his ministers without first checking with him.*
- *Wanted to have a person of his choice as my Secretary.*
- *Did not want the LG to interact with officials.*
- *Preferred voluntary retirement of the sick mills’ workers instead of accepting the recommendations of the one-person panel who had advised closure of the mills due to obsolete machinery and heavy liabilities making them unviable.*
- *He wanted a release of 136 crores for Yanam's flood project in which officials had already been penalised for the inherent irregularities.*
- *Insisted on free rice and Pongal gifts in kind to only the ration cardholders. Instead of distributing to those below poverty line. He also disagreed on a direct transfer into beneficiaries bank accounts.*

The bottom line to all these contentions was fundamental financial approvals and integrity in administration.

The agitation gathered momentum; the cabinet held meetings outside the Raj Nivas gates, maintaining the lock-in. VIP politicians from outside visited them. That raised the profile for more media attention.

Finally, a nudge from New Delhi helped resolve the matter. We met unconditionally, but only for optics.

When I look back and reflect on what could have been the fundamental purpose of this Dharna-Drama, it was to gain sympathy for the upcoming Lok Sabha seat election.

They won this one - But lost in the Assembly elections.



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CHAPTER 50

MARCHING FORWARD DESPITE ALL ODDS



With Shri Amit Shah, Union Home Minister

What made me keep marching forward and deal with difficult people with entrenched interests?

Most of all, the Honourable Prime Minister, the Union Home Minister, and Union Home Secretary, Mr. Ajay Bhalla, were fully aware of the prevailing hostility against the Central Government of India and me personally. Because of their timely and unstinted support, we could secure expensive legal services to defend the position of the Lt. Governor in the highest courts of law.

My experience in policing also came in handy. I knew it was the question of survival of some persons desperate to hang on to power. They would fight with each other and unite situationally.

I had to let go of their hostility in the more significant interest of the administration. All systems like the Open House and others were

on higher ground, and it made no sense to expend my limited time changing these persons.

I was not their teacher; I was a threat to them. They were only tolerating me. They were the locals. They knew soon I shall go away. I was their common enemy.

I found them insecure with their professions which they expressed daily in many ways. They were dependent on transactions for every act of theirs. Mine was transformative, with nothing to ask for in return.

I responded where I needed to and also when to let go. I did not need to argue back. There was no point wasting time. I also knew my limitations in not knowing Tamil. I sent timely rejoinders not to give a walkover where something needed to be clarified.

I knew they were envious of my public goodwill. I had to move on.

My messages at work and in Puducherry as its Lt. Governor were focused on calibrated responses without losing sight of the true action-right intention- a higher purpose.

We were a happy lot.

We Opened up Raj Nivas to JOY from day ONE.



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VII

**Raj Nivas
To
People Nivas**

CHAPTER 51

RAJ NIVAS SPREADS JOY- A CENTRE FOR CULTURE



From day one of my arrival, Raj Nivas was made a people- friendly and accessible place. I made it known to Team Raj Nivas that we should not miss any opportunity in connecting with people, we implemented it in letter and spirit.

From the day of the oath ceremony itself, it was made publicly known that we shall work and celebrate together inclusively.

Raj Nivas remained open to anyone in need. The conducting of Open House at the Raj Nivas within two days of the oath was evidence of that. Along with people, the daily sequenced departmental presentations brought middle-ranked and several officers to Raj Nivas. When meetings ran into lunchtime, they had their food in the Raj Nivas dining hall.

Most of them disclosed that this was their first-ever visit inside the Raj Nivas in all their decades of service.

We opened Raj Nivas to visitors including children. Mrs. Asha Gupta, Comptroller Raj Nivas, would escort the visitors to the Durbar Hall on the first floor to see the precious artefacts, some more than 100 years old.

Honourable President of India did us the honor of staying at Raj Nivas with his family, during his visit to Puducherry.



Raj Nivas neither had a conference hall nor a meeting room. We used the Durbar Hall selectively to host events, such as teachers and principals meet, women’s groups, public officials, foreign dignitaries, guest speakers and more.



We hosted a Lecture Series where eminent speakers delivered talks on varied subjects ranging from leadership, management, history, philosophy and others. The blessed presence of Sadguru Jaggi Vasudev, the investigative zeal of Maxwell Pereira, practices of excellence by Rajeev Peshawaria, the Vision of Debashis Chatterjee, the Vedic Relevance by Jaya Rao, Swami Radhanathji and many more brought in unparalleled knowledge to citizens of Puducherry.

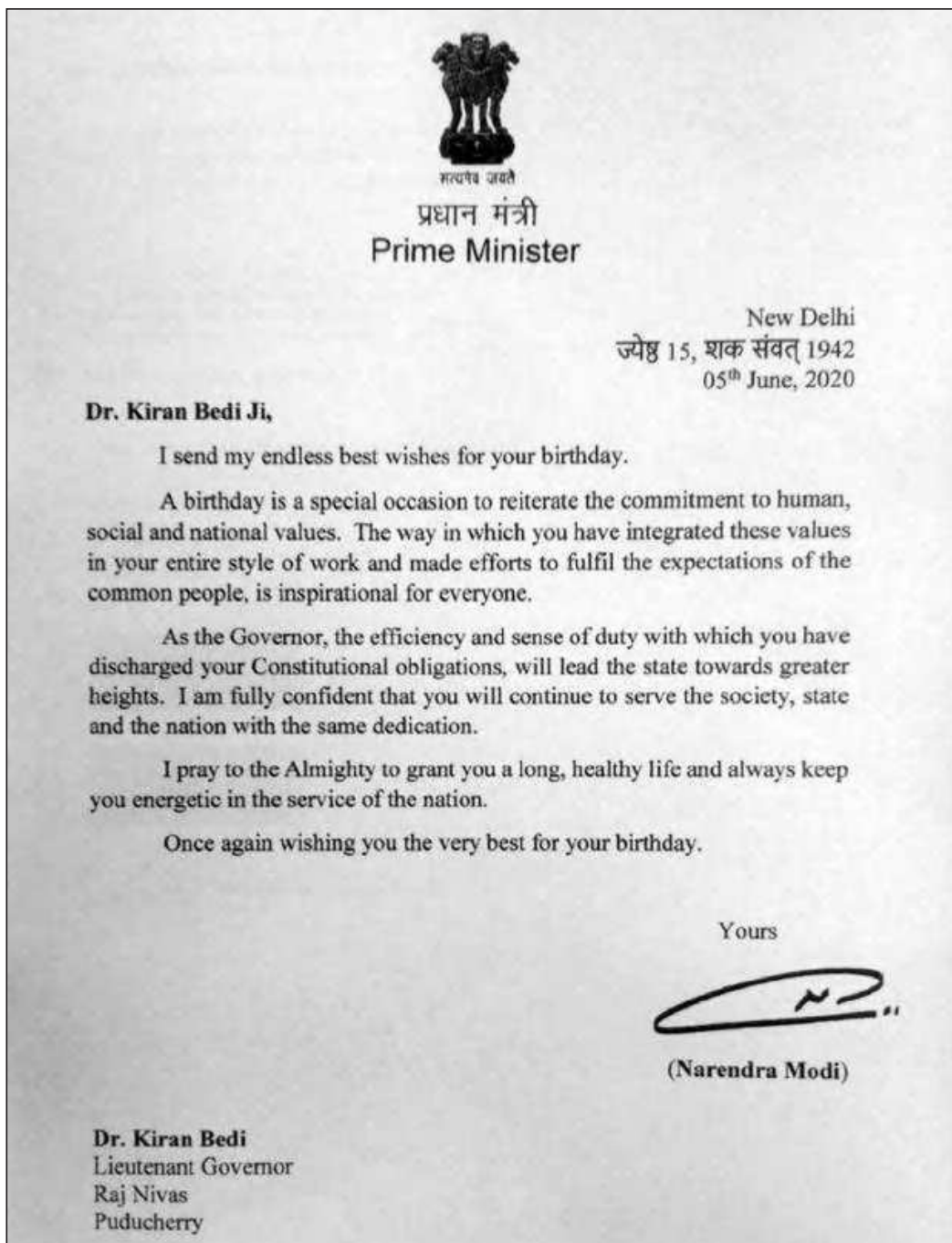


We envisaged leadership series to hone the skills of senior officers towards leadership essentials of public speaking, knowledge sharing, interaction and above all-break barriers and create bonds of team spirit in the administration. These talks were intrinsic for officials and open to prominent and interested citizens.

For the art and culture series, the gallery space of this heritage building was always the perfect exhibition backdrop. The paintings by the prison inmates, my nature photographs, Vedic chanting, wildlife in urban forests were some dimensions of art and culture series.



The lawns of Raj Nivas hosted events where the congregations were large. We did not miss any occasions of celebrations. The evenings saw the grounds of Raj Nivas being fully utilised by the Comptroller for hosting festivals and the annuals. We followed the events calendar as finalised by the Team, like celebrating the regional Pongal festival with the Raj Nivas fraternity family members. We invited children from unique homes, nuns, senior citizens, and choirs for Christmas carols.



Iftar in Raj Nivas in the past meant a splurge of non-vegetarian fare, unlimited guests, and considerable expenditure.



Iftar at the Raj Nivas then became an evening of prayer and symbolic fast-breaking. Meals were frugal and shared over joyful conversations. But dinner was just another reason to celebrate - all we did was eat and enjoy together and get photographed to immortalise rare moments.

The lawns also doubled up as open-air cinema theatre for fortnightly shows preferably for the under underprivileged children.

They came with their teachers, and parents could join if they wished. We screened Award-Winning and educational films for Special children from Destitute Homes, Government and elite institutions as a part of the film series.



I greeted all the children before the opening of the shows. We took group photos.

A corporate house sponsored the cinema equipment and the film; Raj Nivas did not have the equipment; the producers willingly gave us the copyrights to screen.

As the Raj Nivas was open for visitors in the afternoons, it brought in tourists, both Indian and foreigners. They all cherished their visits. Our in-house photographer took their pictures and sent them via WhatsApp.

The travellers coming to the Raj Nivas brought in flowers, sweets, handicrafts, books, and varied memorabilia for me. All gifts received were redistributed, and we placed the non-perishable donations in a cupboard in the LG Office. They were further gifted away as rewards to support staff, meritorious children, sports teams and more.

The Raj Nivas also conducted internship programs for youth. We supported causes outside the Raj Niwas as institutional social responsibility.



A people's Nivas welcomed citizens into its precincts. We reached out to the public domain to actualise programs such as cycling campaigns;

Team walks, recycling of flowers, harvesting fruits from Raj Nivas' mango trees, distributing saplings, stationery and sports equipment.

Puducherry's cleaning force, also called the women in pink, was specially invited to celebrate women's day at the Raj Nivas and presented with sarees from donors.





Such was a way of life in the Raj Nivas Puducherry till Covid locked down the Raj Nivas.



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CHAPTER 52

THE INTERNS



I believe in involving the youth in all aspects of administration. I tried to co-opt youth with administration right from the beginning of my posting in Puducherry.

I began with the Central University students intending to sensitise youth to governance and the departments to benefit from youthful ideas and energy.

The young students could learn from the seniors and get mentored, linking the Engineering college students with several wings of the Public Works Department, Power, and others.

Similarly, the students of liberal arts could be related to the department of education and even policing. The scope for partnership was endless.

However, I observed that neither the political establishment nor the leadership in bureaucracy was willing to open up to such youth interns.

I realised that partnerships would not happen unless there were a mindset. I did not impose this policy on them as an attitudinal change must precede such a collaboration.

But at Raj Nivas, we got whosoever volunteered. Interns were a source of significant support. They were the ones who were instrumental in managing a variety of events at Raj Nivas.

Full credit for this synergy went to Mrs. Asha Gupta. It was her organising capability that knitted them together. Some even earned internships from her.

Now came a period of model code of conduct of Parliamentary election, during which the LG office was not to be seen or heard. So, we at Raj Nivas thought, why not do something different? In-house?

We hit upon the idea of Raj Nivas hosting an internship program called the 'Youth Education Program' (YEP).

The objective of this YEP was to foster public service and leadership skills while providing a unique opportunity to equip the enthusiastic youth with valuable professional experience in nation-building- New India.

Interns were to gain hands-on experience to strengthen their understanding of the executive role of the Raj Nivas and its mission to serve the people of Puducherry and the Nation. Each of them was guided by Team Raj Nivas.

We reached out to the youth through an Instagram story to achieve this. We received an overwhelming response within a few hours, with applications coming from various states and from within Puducherry.

It was the first such batch for a summer internship where Team Raj Nivas had the time and resources to groom young minds holistically.

Students were to arrange their boarding and lodging. We provided them with a working lunch and evening tea. They could return to their places for dinner.

We chalked out a detailed program to help interns develop the ‘Person’ and ‘Professional’ in them.



The Interns Delivering Lectures

We invited the First-ever internship batch of 24+ students to work at the Raj Nivas. Any given day included conducting research, analytical report making, documentation, understanding security dynamics; they attended our meetings and briefings; updated presentations and fact sheets. They participated in a variety of creative activities.



The Interns Participating In Raj Nivas Activities

The interns worked on social media communications, open house data, interactions with visitors, social outreach programs, service: and eco-oriented projects: liaisoning with schools, colleges and NGO's, event concept creation and event management.

Additionally, they conducted Intern Lecture series, attended Yoga Sessions, assisted Raj Nivas in IT projects, took culinary sessions, did field visits, and more.

The students maintained their internship diary. They came up with some good research articles, and we documented them. The happiest part of the program was the overwhelming response from the students. We were able to see how happy and satisfied they were, and most of them took to their social media handles to write about their experiences.

“It was a blissful and blessed experience at the Raj Niwas, the office of the Honorable Lieutenant Governor of Puducherry. The Youth Engagement Program initiated by Dr. Kiran Bedi was a package for the road to personal and professional. We worked. We learned. We evolved. I may reach great heights, but what should be inevitable is that humility is the most significant learning for me observing Dr. Bedi so closely. Learning leadership from a leader like her, an Indian Police Service officer, social activist, and former tennis player, taught me how a leader remains grounded and evolves.”

“The best part is where we, turn wise, played the role of a leader a day and had opportunities to be mentored by Madam every day. I learned about responsibility, empathy, and inclusivity in depth. Indeed, I went deep into every learning.”





“Being a part of Super60 was a great learning experience in college. Continuing this learning here at Raj Nivas was an added feather to the crown. Thanks to Dr. Kiran Bedi and Team Raj Nivas, who made this possible. I insist all my juniors wait for this opportunity next, and undoubtedly it will be a promising one!”

This internship helped provide students with experience and exposure in dynamic work environments of the Government to enhance their educational goals and help shape their career paths. It also inspired them for social leadership in a participative & progressive NEW INDIA.

Meanwhile, the election period was over, and we bounced back to our regular days. We resumed our Open House and continued to redress people’s grievances.



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CHAPTER 53

TEAM RAJ NIVAS



Key Pillars of Team Raj Nivas.

Mr. G. Neethi Dhas - An outstanding IAS officer, joined me as a Secretary and post-retirement, continued as Officer on Special Duty (OSD). A man with unblemished integrity and profound institutional memory, he was a thorough professional, dispassionate and just. He was self-driven and always prepared before advising me. He understood me fully.

G. Srinivas was my former Additional Secretary who actively supported Mr. Dhas and me in administration till he moved to another posting. He was the architect of the electronic Petition Monitoring system (PMS) and the creator of the Raj Nivas website.

Mr. R. Sridharan was most proficient in understanding the laws and rules. Sridharan was my Private Secretary and went the extra mile for me. He assiduously pursued all the court battles for the years we worked together. Under the guidance of Mr. Dhas, toiled on all legal cases in courts, which secured favourable judgments every time. Besides addressing grievances redressal, he accompanied me on my morning rounds. He was my mind reader. Sridhar translated my English conversations into Tamil wherever required.

Mrs. Asha Gupta was the Comptroller of the Raj Nivas. A woman with enormous dynamism. She fully accomplished in making the Raj Nivas a People Nivas. She innovated, organised, facilitated, promoted, and implemented all creative activities held at the Raj Nivas. Her commitment and devotion enabled donors to connect to make Puducherry Greener and Water-Rich.

Dr. Bascarane was the most revered and trusted police officer of Puducherry Police. The Chief Grievances officer worked with total earnestness and vigour in resolving thousands of grievances. He tracked all grievances with petitioners. He went on the spot to ensure their resolution. No police control room call or a message for help escaped his attention. His steadfastness and problem-solving skills resolved many nettlesome issues.

Dr. Amrita Bahl, another treasured team member, my OSD, for almost two years, coined with me the mission statement 'Prosperous Puducherry.' She initiated and put together the Social Media Team and facilitated the 100 Rounds and the Raj Nivas Work Book publications.

R. Kumaran was the PRO who diligently shared the news bulletins and managed the media comprehensively. He compiled Tracking News in Tamil, a unique compilation of headlines of all years of my tenure. He diligently circulated the news clips on all WhatsApp groups

for all officers to read every morning. He also assisted me in the Open House in meeting the petitioners and helped translate in Tamil.

S.D. Sundaresan, a senior bureaucrat, later became the new team member of Team Raj Nivas on the transfer of G.Srinivas.



CHAPTER 54

THE CREATIVE TEAM



A Creative team works at Raj Nivas to amplify the reach of programs. Platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, linkedIn and YouTube are used to share content and gather opinions. The publication is also a vertical of this team.

**14.2
MILLION
FOLLOWERS**

When I took charge as LG of Puducherry, I decided not to administer in isolation. People were to be fully engaged. This would call for a 'communication team' to shape the public discourse while being politically neutral. I needed a bridge between the LG's office and the people. To prepare for this, the Creative Team was born.

Soon after becoming the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi urged all his ministers to start Facebook and Twitter pages to bring transparency in government actions and make them easily accessible. We also saw almost all Union Ministers on social media responding to people's grievances and acknowledging their suggestions. As LG, I benefitted equally from their digital presence.

Within the initial days of working as LG, my OSD, Dr. Amrita Bahl, assembled a small unit with the help of Team Raj Nivas. We got on board Manikanandan, a photographer; Vijayan, a videographer; Poonguzhali, his wife for videography and video editing; and Beena Sivan, a rapporteur. All were to assist the Public Relations Officer with the daily content the PRO would need.

My Private Secretary would write the presser, and PRO would release it. Since I was on Twitter and a few other handles, I continued to share the events of public interest.

The media got its news from my posts and several times asked for more from the PRO. In this way, my existing social media handles aided the official communication.

Amrita and her unit started LG handles on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube, which the team regularly updated.

Over and above, we widely posted on 'Prosperous Puducherry', the mother WhatsApp group. Messages from here got forwarded in the other networks that grew.

As our efforts gained momentum, the unit became a creative team. We added more members. Ms. Asha Gupta, the Comptroller of Raj Nivas, was made the lead coordinator and Joseph for technical support. Raj Nivas entrusted documentation work to Pooja Lal. Isha Arora joined as a digital media intern.

We hired the services of Raphael, a graphic designer. Ms. Shivani Arora volunteered for translating, designing the graphics, writing and more. Ms. Asha Gupta co-opted more interns into her team to make graphics and shorts for social media. Her initiatives worked well.

The creative team toiled earnestly to share relevant information through the social media handles. It was instrumental in publishing

several publications like the Raj Nivas Work Book, The Best Practices Book, Tracking the News (a dossier), Water Rich Puducherry, 1000 days, Raj Nivas Picture Book, to name a few.

The team also made photographic and video documentaries on festive occasions and creative activities.

Despite the politicians' aversion to our social media usage, nothing stopped us from engaging with it. We reached out to the people through valuable communication tools, seeking need-based support to dredge our irrigation channels and urban drains. The return we got was most encouraging.

The Creative team served as a communications bridge between the LG office and the people. It worked directly under my guidance.

In November 2018 and 2019, my LinkedIn profile made it to the list of top 25 profiles in India, based on the posts and ideas posted on trending topics and our responses to those posts.



Blogs, posters, pictures, and videos helped make our social media vibrant and our posts more effective and far-reaching. The power of technology-facilitated the office to communicate in our WhatsApp groups within minutes.

SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS



OUR CREATIVE TEAM



**Amrita OSD to
LG Puducherry**



**Asha Gupta Comptroller
Raj Nivas & Social
Media Supporter**



**Beena Sivan
Documenter & Social
Media Supporter**



**Isha Arora
Social Media Executive
& Documentation
Supporter**



**Joseph
Computer Operator**



**J. Kumaran Public
Relation Officer**



**Late. K. Vijayan
Videographer &
Media Supporter**



**Karthigeyan
ADC of LG**



**Manikandan
Photographer**



**Nanda Das
Documentation &
Library Assistant
Supporter**



**Pooja Lal Specialist
Documenter & Library
Assistant, Social Media
Supporter**



**Poonguzhali
Videography Assistant &
Social Media Supporter**



**Raphael Napoleon
Designer, Editor, Raj
Nivas Publication &
Social Media Supporter**



**Shivani Arora
Author & Editor,
Social Media Supporter**

RAJ NIVAS PUBLICATIONS



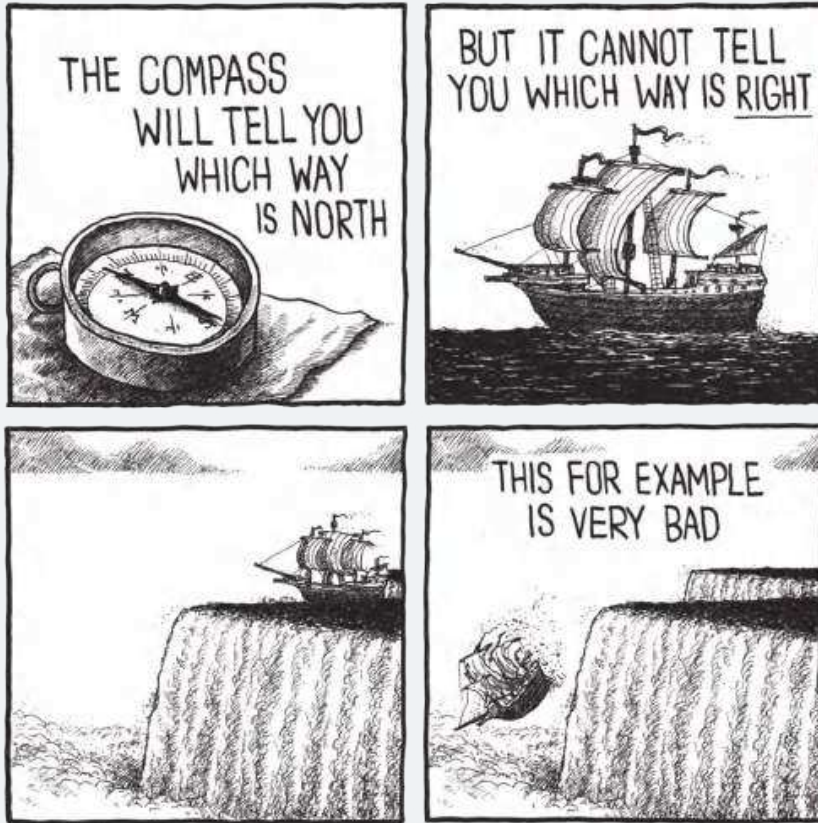
Scan QR for Photos & Raj Nivas Publication

**THERE IS NO
FINISH LINE**



CHAPTER 55

THE ELECTORAL LOSS



My appointment as LG and the installation of the elected Government was within weeks of each other. We also left similarly. We spent our entire period in discord.

What if this Government, from the beginning, accepted the legal reality of the position of the LG which the Apex Judiciary reiterated.

It is not that these leaders did not know. They knew it, as was noticeable in the first dinner meeting. When they undoubtedly suggested and hoped that I sign on the dotted lines. They were hoping for a ceremonial rubber stamp to approve all they proposed.

Their Wish List:

- *Ratify appointments and transfers of officials in essential positions even with enquiries pending against them. Let officers keep waiting for postings and let posts be vacant.*
- *Commend conversion of water bodies for house plots, also called 'Pattas' in Puducherry / or digging more bore wells in coastal zones in violation of Water Policy.*
- *Carry on borrowing to pay.*
- *Withhold gratuities of employees and divert provident funds.*
- *Refuse officers the right to defend themselves before the courts of law.*
- *Acquiesce to sexual harassment and not move the delinquent officers out.*
- *Allow departments to remain working in silos and not coordinate with each other.*
- *Discount acts and complaints of corruption concerning elected representatives. Or take their prior concurrence to seek reports.*
- *Redirect money meant for infrastructure to meet unbudgeted expenses.*
- *Dodge clarifications to people when falsehood is published.*
- *Not defend the Government of India when maliciously accused.*
- *Overlook streets civic services grievances such as unclean areas, encroachments and water bodies full of garbage.*
- *Ignore the dipping water table in Puducherry.*
- *Shun involving experts even when needed for Covid treatment and management?*
- *Concede before private medical colleges to extort high fees from hapless students?*

- *Shut Raj Nivas when it is a public office? Remain not visible; stay ceremonial only.*
- *Not Summon files even when stuck with a particular cabinet minister for years.*
- *Overlook poor quality education in govt schools and educational institutions and keep positions vacant.*
- *Ignore land grabbing and false FIRs to alter land tenant status.*
- *Discount extortion happening from business people.*
- *Forget questioning any Minister travelling overseas without due permission of the Government of India.*
- *Permit religious gatherings to violate Covid appropriate behaviour*
- *Order traffic police not to prosecute scooter drivers not wearing helmets?*
- *Don't meet officers and mentor them. Discount use of technology to communicate.*
- *Avoid making field visits. Just stay put in Raj Nivas.*

Had the political establishment respected the reality of the Lt. Governor's legal position, Puducherry would have offered the country a role model of Governance- The 'Puducherry Model of Administration'.

Instead, the political establishment made Puducherry into a battleground of 'conflicts and court combats' on every issue, expending public time and resources fighting, agitating, doing dharnas, surrounding Raj Nivas, and demanding recalls.

Moral of the Story

Public representatives need to stay true to their aspirations and not misguide. We did not have a political trust quotient, which kept the bureaucracy distracted and muddled.

As election results showed, people sent them packing. Puducherry lost a lifetime opportunity to offer a governance model of harmonious functioning.

However, ‘Fearless Governance’ is a To-Do TEMPLATE of administration for leadership anywhere despite odds.

The Public Affairs Index (PAI) reported Puducherry as the best-governed U.T for two years consecutively.

We delivered.

We did not wait for others to change-We went all out.

We had people, youth, women, professionals, donors, the Ashram and the Auroville. We had the will.

We remained Fearless.

Rest is history.



LEGACY LEFT BEHIND



We, the public officials in Puducherry, had by now become one large family.

We were now emotionally related and technologically networked. Of course, there were exceptions.

We had now started to call ourselves 'Team Puducherry.' We all felt related and answerable.

We were together evaluating our work, collaborating, and coordinating. Team Puducherry was mentored and adequately provided. Everyone now had legal clarity on the responsibilities of the LG office.

While some were still weak to stand up to vested interests, they were also aware that working alone would not help. We had Secretaries and seniors who were steering their departments. They were driving the change while being evaluated on centrally sponsored schemes directly by the PM himself.

Those with vested interests knew they could not mess around. We were closely following the financial rules. The direct transfer of funds stopped leakages. The GEM Portal was mandated for all government

purchases. Extortions from rowdies stopped, as did land grabbing. Policing became more visible because the system opened.

The Chief Secretary was nonpartisan. He was not dividing officers into camps and groups.

The city became cleaner, greener, and safer. Voluntarism grew amongst the youth and others. 'Raj Nivas was People Nivas.'

Back door entries of recruitment stopped. Every person now was feeling personally responsible. Every department had a declared plan for the year ahead and shared it with me in the second round of One-On-Ones. The media became more probing, as is its duty.

All the above were the product of changing attitudes. However, this was still in the twilight zone. It needed continuum.

The critical driver of change came with the appointment of the Chief Secretary in November of 2017. A man of impeccable integrity. His coming also brought in subsequent changes in a few other senior positions.

Close monitoring of nearly 90 centrally sponsored schemes by the Government of India made all the difference. Besides frequent visits from Central Ministries and daily sharing of observations within department groups.

Regular virtual reviews and briefings, one-on-one, offices inspections, and minutes sharing immediately after, using social media, helped the team keep up the progress.

We maintained our networking through regular Open House, field checks, weekend rounds, grievances redressal and optimum use of technology in internal communications. This nourished people's trust in the administration.

The Government of India informed me that they had accepted my request to move back.

I left for Delhi with a truckload of a personal library, the source of this book.

I served Puducherry from May 29 to Feb 16, 2021. I received a very warm farewell.

Public Affairs Index Report, 2021

THE HINDU NOVEMBER 6, 2021

nefit the consumers. consumers, he added.

Puducherry is the best-governed U.T., says PAI report

Think-tank uses Centre's data in its study

**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
PUDUCHERRY**

Puducherry has emerged as the best-governed Union Territory in the sixth edition of the Public Affairs Index (PAI 2021) report of the Public Affairs Centre (PAC), a non-profit think-tank, based in Bengaluru.

Puducherry notched up a score of 1.345 on an assessment across a range of parameters and led the pack of Union Territories for the second successive year, according to the PAI 2021.

Among the six Union Territories, only Puducherry and Jammu & Kashmir obtained positive scores while the remaining four obtained a negative score.

Sustainable development
The independent and evidence-based study using only Central government data available in the public domain, looked at governance performance in the context of sustainable development defined by three pillars - equity, growth and sustainability, five themes, 14 sustainable development goals and 43 indicators.

The index also took into consideration the administration's response to the pandemic.

The PAI heat map also showed that Puducherry topped in equity, growth and sustainability.

"Puducherry maintains its 1st rank as last year, followed by Dadra Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu. The poor performers are: Chandigarh at 5th rank and Andaman and Nicobar Islands at 6th. Puducherry with a higher positive correlation coefficient dominates the rankings...", the report said.

On the sustainability front, the report observed that in order for States and Union Territories to attain holistic development, they need to ensure ease of living through keeping in check the pollution levels and should not ignore the factor of cleanliness through solid waste management.

Good Practices for Public Officials



5 KEY GOOD PRACTICES OF PUBLIC OFFICIALS

I. THE GRIEVANCE REDRESSAL SYSTEM :

- Our approach is, "Why should people wait to be served? We must be impatient to serve them."
- All sources are tapped – (including Social Media) such as Open House, 1031 toll free, Whatsapp, Emails, Postal, Portal, & more.
- Grievances received are acknowledged, recorded and tracked with government departments for redressal. All efforts are made to provide early solutions.
- The petitioner stays connected until their grievance is satisfactorily addressed.



II. * CSR MOBILIZATION IN MISSION WATER RICH PUDUCHERRY :

- Working in collaboration – The donor directly pays the service provider.
- The model of desilting urban and rural water channels, water bodies & more in collaboration with industries/ institutions and communities. Working together with all line departments.
- A sustainable model, as long as the spirit of collective work remains.



III. WHATSAPP GROUPS ACROSS RANK & FILE :

- Whatsapp groups to enable optimum internal interaction between public officials across hierarchies, for urgent attention.
- Ensure instant responses to public grievances, co-ordination within government, better sharing of valuable public information, feedback and issues requiring urgent attention.
- Unites all stake holders in serving the public. Promotes Inter + Intra Communications.



IV. FINANCIAL PRUDENCE & STRICT ADHERENCE TO FINANCIAL RULES :

- Strict adherence to financial rules and spending within allocated budgets.
- Firm decisions taken such as abolishing Business- class air travel for officers in favour of economy-class tickets.
- Close watch on wasteful expenses
- Promoting DBT (Direct Transfer of Funds)



V. FOCUS ON OFFICERS LED FIELD VISITS BY CONVERGENCE OF DEPARTMENTS :

- Inspecting locations where deficiencies are reported and detected for speedy rectification by frequent field visits.



* Donors contributed and desilted 874 kms of irrigation channels, 406 ponds, 4 lakes, 3 wells, 5 check dams, and 21 tanks.



/LtGov.Puducherry



/Lt.Governor_Puducherry



/LGov_Puducherry



rajnivas.py.gov.in



/lgov_puducherry

The onus is on the successors how much more they add to this distance travelled. And further, improve the same. Time alone will tell.



CHAPTER 57

A SUM UP FEARLESS GOVERNANCE FOR PUBLIC OFFICIALS



Fearless Governance by public officials means fulfilling responsibilities with the utmost integrity to honour the higher of the given charge. Never forget the real reason for the service you are in.

Your service is secure.

You create insecurities when you lose track of the higher purpose.

The public employee is the face of the Government; the public official remains accountable till the last day of his pension. Always keep this in mind.

Also, always remember an elected representative comes and goes.

But you stay on in service, transferable though, as long as you keep serving from wherever you are. Your decisions follow you. You remain accountable.

You are afraid when you want something for yourself from the position you are holding and want to hold on.

You can remain fearless so long you are focused on the fundamental objectives. You become fearful when you have a personal distraction. Remain watchful.

It is fearlessness in the administration that drove the changes in Puducherry. This book holds evidence. Had we as a team been apprehensive, we would have been a failure and failed the purpose for which we were there.

At every step, as the book illustrates, there was fierce hostility. We faced it with conviction and faith in our beliefs.

We went ahead as long as it was for the greater good and lawful. We defended it with whatever resources we had. We respected our work and thoroughly loved doing so.

Here are a few essential nuggets of guidance for public officials to remain fearless and high performing to provide good governance.

***Be Accessible**, create open systems by which people can reach you, most certainly if your work is in public service.*

***Be Visible**, be Recognisable. People need to see their officers.*

***Don't get Pressured** to break the rules to oblige. If you do it once, nothing stops you from repeating it.*

***Find Solutions**, Connect with beneficiaries and listen, Innovate and collaborate, Form coalitions, Keep administration participative.*

Be Ready to Move out of your comfort zone. Make family your ally.

May the service of humanity bring you joy and all round prosperity always. Good luck!



Times of India 25 December, 2021

Stop passing the buck when you see files, cab secy tells officers

Dipak.Dash@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: For years, government officials have taken refuge in phrases such as “may also see” or “may kindly see” on files that move from one desk to another just because no one wants to take a call on the matter mentioned in them — a case of passing hot potatoes around in circles.

The “syndrome” has caught the attention of and drawn criticism from the country’s top bureaucrat at a time when the government is seeking to speed up decision-making and reduce red tape. Cabinet secretary Rajiv Gauba urged senior officers to consciously avoid taking recourse to

‘LAYERS DIFFUSE RESPONSIBILITY’

► There are too many levels in govt hierarchy & files go through different layers, not adding any value, says cabinet secy Rajiv Gauba -
► Says multiple levels don't make any significant



RAJIV GAUBA

contribution to decision-making; they consume more time & diffuse responsibility

► Points to ‘culture of marking papers up’, says ‘syndrome’ of ‘May also see or May kindly see’ on files is ‘risk avoidance’ by officials to ‘feel safe that it has been seen by somebody else or somebody above’

such phraseology and encourage other colleagues not to succumb to risk-averse behaviour.

Seeking a change in the way the government works, the cabinet secretary said at a workshop on ‘Increasing Efficiency in Decision Making’

that unless government departments change their culture and take timely decisions, even big-ticket announcements made by the government will not take off.

► Several levels, P 16

Several levels just add to time consumed: Cabinet secy

► Continued from P 1

Several levels don't make any value addition; they don't make any significant contribution to decision-making and also these don't mean qualitatively better scrutiny. What they certainly mean is more time consumed and diffused responsibility so that they can say that so many other people also looked at that issue and so there is abdication of responsibility,” he said, referring to file submissions at multiple levels while speaking at the event which

We are familiar with the syndrome of ‘may also see’ so that you feel safe that it has been seen by somebody else, said Gauba

was part of the Good Governance Week.

Gauba’s comments came after coal secretary Anil Kumar Jain flagged how many officers were simply putting their signatures on files without adding any value. Road transport secretary Giridhar Aramane also cited how there was huge delay in issuing toll fee notification for highway stretches as the files had to pass through several layers of officials, which has now been drastically reduced.

The cabinet secretary said that in government system, there is a culture of marking papers to the higher-ups even when decisions can be taken at the junior level. “We are familiar with the syndrome of ‘may also see’ or ‘may kindly see’ so that you feel safe that it has been seen by somebody else or somebody above. I think this has to do with risk avoidance. The DoPT and DAPRG (administrative reform and grievances redressal department) should look at the root cause of why this syndrome has developed and what needs to be done,” he said.

Referring to presentations made by different secretaries highlighting how the current practice of processing files through different levels only makes things worse, Gauba said that in such cases there are more people who can stop decisions by deciding to have a discussion or raise questions.

POST - DEPARTURE
APPRECIATION LETTER AND
THE BATON
WITH HONOURABLE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAMNATH KOVIND



Scan QR for Video

THE LETTER



राष्ट्रपति
भारत गणतंत्र
PRESIDENT
REPUBLIC OF INDIA

08 March, 2021

Dear Dr. Kiran Bedi,

I am pleased to recall that you held the highest constitutional post of Lt. Governor of UT of Puducherry. The method of discharging your constitutional duties evoked respect and appreciation from all. You ensured that the dignity of the position you held was maintained during your tenure and the invaluable contributions made by you revolved around welfare of the people of Puducherry.

The diverse experiences earned by you in your role of a public servant proved to be beneficial in this stint. Your demeanour, achievements and attitude have been a source of inspiration to innumerable people in our country. I sincerely wish you a healthy and long life.

With immense pleasure, I present you a baton decorated with the emblem of the Indian Republic, as a memento.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

(Ram Nath Kovind)

Dr. Kiran Bedi
Former Lt. Governor of UT of Puducherry
India Vision Foundation,
56, 1st Floor, Uday Park,
New Delhi – 110049.

DOCUMENTATION ROOM



Residential Office & the Documentation Room



Fearless Governance is an outcome of 6 years of diligent documentation comprising journals, live visuals capturing the day's events.

The habit of preserving such ‘treasures’ is an inherited legacy learned from my father. He saved the news clippings of tennis tournaments from the sports page for me to see on my return from travels. These clippings are still with me.

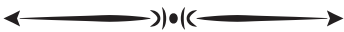
The QR has selected documents, pictures, short video snippets from my library. All substantiate the narration.

This book is a beneficiary of a continuing habit.



I left for Delhi with a truckload of my library, the primary source of this book.

I served Puducherry from May 29, 2016 to Feb 16, 2021.



Scan QR for Photos & Video



THE BOOK TEAM

PERSONAL GRATITUDE

My in-house team that supported me in researching, documenting, designing, editing, graphics and using technology in writing this book.



Aditi Mehrotra



Pooja Lal



Rinkey Kumari



Shivani Arora



Sumit Shukla



SPECIAL GRATITUDE



Publisher-Diamond Pocket Books (P) Ltd.

All Public Officials of Puducherry Government

People of Puducherry

Isha Arora

Interns at Raj Nivas

Riya Raghunathan

Manikanandan

Vijayan & Poonguzhali

Monica Dhawan

Lata Kumari

Preeti Talukdar

House Hold Staff - Raj Nivas, Puducherry & Delhi

India Vision Foundation

Intime Reprographics

Instinct School and Studio of Design

My Family

THE AUTHOR

She is the first woman to join the officer ranks of the Indian Police Service. Kiran Bedi was the 24th Lt. Governor of Puducherry.

She is a PhD from IIT Delhi with a post-doctoral Nehru Fellowship, an author, an Asian tennis champion, recipient of the Ramon Magsaysay Award-Asia's Nobel Peace Award and President's Police Medal for Gallantry. She has a biopic titled 'Yes Madam, Sir' made by an Australian. She has founded two Foundations, 'Navjyoti India Foundation and 'India Vision Foundation', serving the underprivileged in rural-urban areas and prisons.

In her latest book FEARLESS GOVERNANCE, she provides her learnt perspective on the fundamentals of Good Governance.



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