

**Government of Pakistan  
Institutional Reform Cell  
Prime Minister's Office  
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**MINUTES OF THE TASK FORCE ON CIVIL SERVICE REFORMS**  
**MEETING HELD ON 14<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2018**

After welcoming the participants to the first meeting of the Task Force on Civil Service Reform (TFCSR), Dr. Hussain emphasized the need for continuity by building upon the work already done on the subject. He also stressed that the effort of the TFCSR had to align with PM's vision of efficient and effective public service delivery to the masses, particularly its marginalized segments. He underscored the need for implementation of reforms rather than carrying out further diagnostic studies regarding same issues. This was all the more required in view of the time line given to the task force to prepare its recommendations, he emphasized. The house was then opened for discussion.

Prior to the meeting, Dr. Nadeem Ul Haque who could not be present had sent a note to the task force as his intervention requesting that it be taken up for discussion in the meeting and for inclusion in the minute. The note is attached below as attachment 1.

After the meeting, Mr. Ijaz Qureshi also shared his additional thoughts on the meeting overall, The note is attached as attachment 2.

The discussion revolved mainly around the following themes:

1. More than one participant, including Mr. Shahid Kardar, Ms. Naheed Durrani, Mr. Suleiman Ghani and Chief Secretary Balochistan, highlighted the structural issues in the civil service. It was viewed that civil service reform had to be situated in the context of overall restructuring effort, stemming from the situation post the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment and were of the opinion that, ideally, both Committees should be merged for greater clarity, comprehensiveness and cohesiveness of the reform proposals. There was over-centralization and the middle and bottom tiers of the civil service edifice had become ineffective.
2. Mr. Shahid Kardar and Mr. Suleiman Ghani mentioned the concentration of powers in the office of the Secretary, especially as the PAO accountable for the delivery of all functions and transactions conducted under the auspices of the Ministry. They argued for the need to reassess and relocate the role, skill mix requirements and associated rules of Business, of the Federal Government, in particular, in a rapidly changing global and domestic technological and economic environment.

3. Since most members were of the view that sensitive political questions required to be addressed after the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment before a civil service reform strategy could be implemented Mr. Suleman Ghani and Mr. Shahid Kardar suggested that the Task Force should focus on the Federal level services and questioned the need for the continuation of the PAS and Police cadres. They were of the view that the Federal government had to engage more in setting a strategic direction, policy making and standard setting while letting the provinces take charge in practical governance matters.
4. Both Mr Shahid Kardar and Mr. Suleman Ghani stressed the point that a reform of the Civil Services could not be de-linked from the restructuring of Government, more so in the context of the need to enhance the capacities of the Provinces to deliver on their post-18th Amendment mandate and the present Government's desire to put in place empowered and effective local government structures. It would be imperative, therefore, to see Civil Service cadres in the light of the services to be provided by the public sector and the governmental levels at which these services are to be provided and to re-structure the Civil Services accordingly. The example of Local Governments, and the skill-sets needed by these to deliver efficient and sustainable primary and secondary social services and municipal services, was quoted to illustrate this point.
5. Whereas overall reforms and bringing about improvements in the conditions and quality of the Civil Services was much needed, the newly elected government may perhaps be keener to see major improvements made at the basic service delivery level in as short a period as possible. Since this largely meant primary and secondary levels of health and education, water, sanitation , life-line supplies of energy, law & order and revenue services, perhaps that is where our immediate focus should be.
6. The point made by Ms. Nishtar that while an improvement in the general professional quality of officers made through reforms in the recruitment, training, sound posting and transfer policies would surely make a difference, these benefits would not be optimized if the institutional arrangements under which they worked were to remain the same. If decision making remained hierarchical and organizational authority highly rank-based, putting well-trained, professional officers into such jobs would not amount to much. There is need, therefore, to reform organizational structures and re-engineer business processes if reforms are to work. This point had found resonance with both Mr. Suleman Ghani and Mr. Kardar.

7. Adding on to these points; Ms. Naheed Shah Durrani emphasized that in terms of service delivery, one of the major impediments is over centralization of the ministries and departments. Hence, together with the civil services reform, what is probably required in the context of ‘rethinking the government’ is unbundling the implementation components by way of creating dedicated autonomous agencies having adequate financial and management powers and accountability frameworks. Though few agencies do exist at the federal and even provincial level; there is need to consider further unbundling; which can address challenges of performance- based emoluments; hiring of skilled manpower through these compact agencies. Conversely, the permanent ministries/departments should largely be restricted to policy making, financing, coordination and oversight. This can gradually lead to shrinking of size of the government.
8. Mr.Salman Akram Raja pointed the audience towards carefully evaluating cross provincial relationships in view of the judgments of superior courts. The need to revise and update rules of business and official procedures was also highlighted.
9. Mr. Umair Javed, and Mr. Fazl Abbas Maken focused more specifically on how to improve the performance of the civil service for effective governance. Various suggestions were floated in this regard including reforming the federal and provincial public service commissions, improving system of recruitment through measures like separate examination for various professional groups, recurring and domain specific training and an effective performance evaluation system. An apprehension regarding formation of an elite club through the creation of NES was also voiced. It was considered important that the reform process remained flexible and inclusive so that its implementation remained doable.
10. Mr. Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi, Mr. Fazl Abbas Maken and Dr.Sania Nishtar laid emphasis on having clear terms of reference and a design to the entire undertaking. The world was changing and reform process had to take into account the changing paradigms of governance which included frameworks of public-private partnership and greater emphasis on the use of IT. A competitive process for appointment and promotion and tenure security were some of the imperatives for effective public service delivery as highlighted by the speakers.
11. Dr. Nishtar pointed towards perceptions regarding the federal and cadre dominance in the reform process and the need to allay these doubts. Dr Sania Nishtar outlined that civil service reform must be aligned with the overall direction of economic reform in the country and enquired whether ‘austerity’ was the direction of economic reform envisaged or a standalone objective, in response

to which the chair clarified that it was the latter. Dr Sania Nishtar emphasized that before embarking on reform, its objectives should be clear and outlined a range of potential objectives: enhancement of performance, mitigation of inefficiency, addressing the existing culture of politicization and political allegiances, ingraining better transparency and accountability, reducing federal dominance over provincial civil service, addressing cadre politics, bolstering competency, etc. She emphasized that a number of options exist to address each one of these objectives and that there is a need to choose a mix of reform levers that have the maximum potential of impact. In this regard, Dr. Sania said, there is the need to embrace reform at two levels—within the civil service framework but also outside of it in relation to governance norms which impact civil service functioning. Dr Sania Nishtar also stated that the culture of PM's and CMS' directives must to end as there is no legal rationale for that and Estacode sanctity must be restored in earnest.

12. Mr. Maken also emphasized the need for effective training and performance management for improving public service delivery by the civil servants. He alluded to the military model in this regard and also pointed towards the need to adopt a departmental approach towards accountability instead of currently being followed approach where various outside agencies were calling into question the conduct and decision making of the civil servants.

It was recommended that the objectives of the exercise had to align with the PMs Vision and the task force should focus on obtaining some quick wins and collect some low hanging fruits during the exercise.

13. The need for making social and economic incentives available to civil servants in order to improve their performance was highlighted by Mr. Arif Ahmad Khan. His idea that public service delivery had to be technology driven resonated with similar views presented by other participants. He was also of the view that the civil service needed to be freed from political influences and exigencies, if it was to perform at its optimum. Mr. Shahid Kardar questioned the continuation of the Unified Pay Scales beyond the segregation of cadres for professional services like Health and Education (the proposal of the Chair), which, as presently structured, equated the more demanding role of the secretary Finance with say Secretary Social Welfare.
14. Mr. Naveed who represented Sindh government highlighted the need for a broader stakeholder representation in the task force for which he suggested sub-committees.

**Key Takeaways**

- A consensus on the need for meaningful reform in the civil service by reviewing its entire value chain.
- The exercise should have a clear set of short, medium and long term objectives and a structure to it.
- The Task Force may focus on how to gain some quick wins. In this regard two potential recommendations could be made regarding the security of tenure and a competitive process for selection of highest posts in the civil service
- To align the reform effort with the PM's vision of effective public service delivery to the masses, particularly its marginalized and underprivileged segments and, in this context, his expectations from the Task Force.
- Next meeting of the task force was decided to be held on the 27<sup>th</sup> of September with the prospective agenda of deliberating upon the work previously done and assigning specific areas to sub-committees.

The meeting ended with a note of thanks from the chair to the participants