

MINUTES OF THE MEETING
JOINT MEETING OF THE TASK FORCES ON
CIVIL SERVICE REFORMS AND AUSTERITY AND RESTRUCTURING GOVERNMENT

Date: 08th February, 2019
Time: 10:00 am to 05:00 pm
Venue: Prime Minister's Office, Islamabad

The 8th meeting of the *Task Forces on Civil Services Reforms and Austerity and Restructuring Government* was jointly held at Prime Minister's Office, Islamabad under the chair of **Dr. Ishrat Hussain**. The Prime Minister made opening remarks at the meeting and shared his vision and direction with the Task Forces members. Following is a re-cap of the key areas of discussion and decisions.

AGENDA ITEMS	DISCUSSION	DECISIONS
<p>Remarks by the Prime Minister</p>	<p>The Prime Minister while sharing his vision regarding civil services' reforms with the participants stated that depoliticized and merit-based civil service was the key pillar of effective governance. He made reference to 1960s when the bureaucracy was known for its best management practices and became instrumental in achieving fast economic growth in the country. He observed that over time, bureaucracy had fallen victim to political pressures and low motivation. He conveyed his awareness of the issues being confronted by the bureaucracy including harassment by NAB. He said that the Government was very keen to resolve these issues to create an enabling environment for civil services of Pakistan and to make it more efficient and responsive to the needs of the citizens. While quoting the example of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where the goal of depoliticized governance had been achieved to a large extent, he emphasized that doing so had yielded welfare gains for the masses. He emphasized the importance of meritocracy, accountability, specialization, use of information technology and insulation from external pressures in improving the performance of civil servants. While responding to various questions by the participants, the Prime Minister reiterated his commitment to long term reforms and to taking any decisions required to achieve that goal.</p>	

Update on KeyProposals	<p>Chair apprised the Task Force members about the progress report submitted to the Cabinet on the work done by both Task Forces. He informed that in line with the directions of the Prime Minister to keep the Cabinet informed, progress reports for both the Task Forces were presented to the cabinet. However the progress report did not contain any recommendations since each proposal was to be submitted individually to the cabinet for a collective decision. It was reiterated that in case of divergent views amongst the Task Force members, majority view would be put forth for a final decision by the Prime Minister and Cabinet.</p> <p>While updating regarding restructuring of the Federal Govt., it was explained that the plan proposed by the Task Force was reviewed by a Committee of Ministers under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister. There was an agreement in principle on rationalizing the number of Ministries and Divisions but the plan was to be executed not immediately but was not to be executed immediately but at a subsequent and appropriate time. Proposal regarding attached departments, autonomous bodies and redundant organizations had been almost finalized. Secretary Cabinet informed that Secretaries Committee has had two meetings to consider proposal regarding redundant organization and final minutes of the committee meeting would be issued by the 18th February, 2019.</p> <p>The chair also briefed about the progress in policy formulation for curbing the misuse of the monetization scheme for vehicles.</p>	
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Proposals of the Sub-Group on Public Financial Management	The sub-group of the Task Force on Austerity and Restructuring Government working on Public Financial Management presented its proposals. Some of the key areas discussed were PFM Reform Strategy, PFM Law and how to make IFMIS/FABS/PIFRA a more effective tool of financial management in government offices.	After thorough deliberations by the Task Forces on the proposals, it was decided that the sub-group will circulate a revised and a more specific set of recommendations after incorporating the feedback of the members of the Task Forces. It was decided to share PFM Strategy and PFM Law with the members, for their feedback and views. It was considered important to focus on quick wins and distill the presentation to draw out actionable points that could be presented before the Cabinet. It was decided that the sub group will make its final recommendations on these lines in the next meeting of the Task Forces.
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<p>Delegation of Financial Powers</p>	<p>Representative from Finance Division made a presentation on delegation of financial powers.</p>	<p>Following proposals in the presentation were unanimously approved :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Delegation of the Financial Power to the Secretaries/PAOs would be revised. ➤ Budget for each Division to be allocated on two lines : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employees Related Expenses and Operational Expenses. Re-appropriation power within these heads would be vested in Secretaries/PAOs. ➤ The office of the FA and DFAs would be abolished. ➤ CFOs/CF&AOs would be appointed to support the Secretaries/PAOs in financial decisions making including budget, proper appraisal and monitoring, financial control. ➤ Pre-audit powers would be transferred from AGPR to Secretaries and performed by CFOs/CF&AOs. <p>It was decided that these recommendations will be forwarded to the Finance Division for preparing a summary for Cabinets' approval.</p>
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<p>Presentation on Proposals by the Sub-Group on Efficiency & Discipline</p>	<p>The sub-group of the Task Force on Civil Service Reforms working on Government Servant's (Efficiency and Discipline) Rules, 1973 presented its proposals. The provisions of the Rules were deliberated upon at length, and it was observed that since the rules pertained to inefficiency, perhaps there was a need to treat issues that had an element of criminality e.g. corruption, separately. Terms like inefficiency and misconduct needed to be defined more precisely.</p> <p>It was also highlighted that there was need to develop an interface between departmental disciplinary proceeding mechanisms and other agencies like NAB, FIA etc. Utility of department of Anti-Corruption also came under discussion. Majority view was that this institution did not serve any purpose, and was rather a breeding ground for corruption.</p>	<p>It was decided that the criminal offences would be taken out of the purview of the E&D rules and a mechanism would be put in place for interface of departments with NAB and FIA. A committee comprising of Secretaries would scrutinize the criminal aspect of charges against an accused officer, before the matter can be referred to an outside agencies like NAB or FIA. It was also decided to do away with departmental appeals. Moreover a pool of serving and retired officers was proposed to be maintained for the conduct of enquiries, which would also have sector experts/specialists. Mr. Salman Akram Raja was requested to circulate a draft incorporating the agreed proposals by the next meeting.</p>
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Introduction of Working Paper on Pay and Compensation	It was observed that some recommendations of Pay and Pension Commission were required to be included in the Working Paper.	The recommendations of Pay and Pension Commission for delinking sectors like health and education to be incorporated into the Working Paper and circulated. Members of the Task Forces to give their views to the concerned sub group before the next meeting.
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