

Paper 2

State Government and Administration:

Union-State administrative, legislative and financial relations;
Role of the Finance Commission; Governor; Chief Minister; Council of Ministers; Chief Secretary; State Secretariat; Directorates.

1. Even though it appears to overlook state governments on the face of it, the tied grant is actually helping them. Justify.

10 marks (150 words)

Approach

We can answer this question in two parts. In the first part, we can show how the tied grants overlook or appear to overlook the State Governments. Later, in the second part, we need to counter the argument by proving, how the state governments are actually benefitted by it.

From Paper 1

We can bring in the content from Financial Management part. Nevertheless, the quotes and the key words from the first paper are always welcome.

Introduction

In the wake of the provision of profligate farm loan waiver schemes by various state governments; the centre thought out to add a new term of reference to the 15th Finance Commission. The ToR directed the 15th FC to decide the percentage of tied grants which the centre has to devolve to the states.

Body

Tied Grants appear to overlook the state governments as;

- Tied Grants come with the obligation for the State governments to spend them on the sectors specified by the Centre. This approach of the Central Government sidelines the preferences, plans and the initiatives of the state government.
- 15th FC has recommended the centre to devolve 50% of the grants to the state as the tied grants, and most of the grants are tied to drinking water and sanitation. This has brought a suspicion among the state governments that,

the centre is trying to nudge the states to implement its pet scheme of Swachh Bharat Abhiyan at the cost of their favorite ones.

State governments further feel that the centre is meting out a grave injustice to them, as they think the centre is hijacking all the funds to fulfill its manifestoes while the manifestoes of the state will starve due to lack of funds.

- Also, tied grants are to be provided directly to the implementation organs, like the Panchayaths and the Urban local bodies. Hence, the tied grants are seen as the means to weaken the State as a power centre. 15th FC also recommends transferring all the 50% of tied grants that is provided to local governments in graded proportions. [problem of communication and coordination]
- Lastly, tied grants seem to completely sideline the State Finance Commissions which are also the constitutional bodies.

Further they also neglect the State Planning Boards which are crucial to bring in equitable development in the state. Thus, with the ongoing increase in the share as well as the corpus of the tied grants, experts also feel that the states are poised for the lopsided development and the unequal growth. [Violation of hierarchy and the scalar chain]

However they actually help the State;

- On the deeper observation the tied grants have been brought in to stimulate the state governments to perform well. Because, most of the states didn't utilize their untied grants, due to lack of plan and policies. Ex: 14th FC had found that states like Punjab and Assam had not utilized as much of 50% of the untied grants.
- Some other state governments were shrewd enough even to redirect the tied grants towards their pet schemes. Ex: Bihar had converted 80% of the tied grants towards Mukya Mantri Nal Jal and Nali Gali Yojana. And, most of the untied funds of Madhya Pradesh was allocated to just one scheme i.e. Panch Parameshwar Yojana.
- However, the tied grants are mostly tied to the basic schemes like the drinking water, sanitation, rainwater harvesting, water recycling etc which are more important for the growth and development of every state. Hence, forget about the tied grants, an efficient state government should direct even the untied grants and also the state resources towards these domains. So, it is better to consider the tied grants as the demonstrations than as irritants.
- Lastly, the tied grants are being recommended by the Finance Commission, only after the discussion with the State governments, State Planning boards

and the State Finance Commissions. Thus, the question of sidelining the state governments and their institutions does not arise here.

Conclusion

Thus in the conclusion we can say that, the tied grants and the performance grants came as the advanced techniques to mainstream the financial devolution. These, rather than being treated as a political conspiracy of the centre, should be welcomed as the harbingers of development by the state governments. And, any contentions should be resolved through proper communications, than resorting to blame games.

“Centre need not strive for centralization as Indian federalism is centralized by birth”. – Mohit Bhattacharya

2. The role of Chief Secretary seems to be very crucial during these times of CoVID-19 pandemic. Illustrate with the help of suitable examples.

15 marks (250 words)

Approach

A very simple approach for this question is that, we can link all the powers and functions of the Chief Secretary to the current situation of fighting the COVID-19. Further, we have to provide examples, of the Chief Secretaries of various states, who have performed extremely well in controlling the spread of the Coronavirus.

From Paper 1

We can bring in good quotes from the first paper. However, the functions and powers of the Chief Secretary come with specific terms and keywords that are from Paper-1.

Introduction

Munish Moudgil, secretary in the Department of Personnel and Administrative Reforms, stated that 50 per cent of Karnataka's success in handling the pandemic should be given to the Chief Secretary's planning and implementation.

The accolade stated above shows that, Chief Secretaries of all the states are doing meticulous jobs in controlling the pandemic. Though their efforts go unrecognized, words like these are no less than a tribute to their dedicated efforts.

Body

Chief Secretary as the head of the state bureaucracy and as the friend, philosopher and guide of the respective state government; are very crucial especially in case of emergencies such as the COVI-19 pandemic.

As a spearhead of the crucial cabinet meetings: Chief Secretary, as the secretary to the Crisis Management Group of the Cabinet has to arrange several day and night meetings, to devise strategies, to curb the spread of the pandemic. Ex: The Chief Secretaries of Maharashtra (Ajoy Mehta the then incumbent) and Madhya Pradesh

(S R Mohanty) managed the situations in the state even without the presence of a stable government.

As the nodal points for the data, details, and the statics: Chief Secretary is very much essential during the times of emergencies because of his experience and the knowledge about the state. I.e. the facts related to demographics of the state, connectivity of people of the state, the severity of spread of the infection, the availability and access of the health facilities, etc. These are to be present at the finger tips of Chief Secretary and should be provided instantly when called for.

Ex: Telangana High Court directed the CS of the state (Somesh Kumar) to provide the information regarding the spread of virus, and the related preparedness of the state.

As the lynch-pin between the centre and the state: Chief Secretary is the nodal officer to update the central government regarding the severity of the viral infection and the efforts of the state in tackling it. Further, the funds were devolved from the centre based on the briefs provided by the Chief Secretaries. Also, the CS of all the states are called for the meeting by Cabinet Secretary to discuss the future course of actions.

Ex: Chief Secretary of Kerala (Vishwas Mehta) was instrumental in the getting good amount of funds and the medical kits, from the Centre, to his state. That is one of the main reasons why, the state was successful in tackling the disease to a great extent.

As the personal adviser of the Chief Minister: The day to day decisions related to the lockdown were decided by the Chief ministers based on the advice of the Chief Secretaries.

Ex: Chief Secretaries are the persons behind the opinion of various Chief Ministers to extend the lockdown beyond Lockdown-2.0

As a manager and the task master: He has the responsibility to assign the tasks for all the officials of the state secretariat. Further, he has to monitor them with the constant follow up, and has to pull up the laggards and mediocre workers. Many Chief Secretaries even sacked several officers, as the situation was so critical that, there was little room to give them the second chance.

Ex: Punjab chief Secretary (Vini Mahajan) used to get down to the field to take stock of the works assigned, and to oversee the level of preparedness, at the ground level.

As a role model: Several Chief Secretaries inspired their sub-ordinates and also the common people with their creative strategies, taking decision out of facts, meticulous but dispassionate hard-work, and lastly, maintaining a low profile and not making themselves the centre of the story.

Ex: Chief Secretary of Assam (KS Krishna) took to the twitter to caution the people of Kamrup, when there was a sudden surge in the Covid-19 cases in the district.

Conclusion

All these illustrations show that the Office of Chief Secretary is nebula of all the moves and actions taken by the state governments, to tackle the pandemic. And, it is no exaggeration to say that, if not the Chief Secretaries, controlling the spread of the disease would have become an uphill task for the nation.

“You can run an office without the boss, but you can’t run the office without a secretary”. Jane Fonda

