

CGA's speech for Civil Accounts Day 2012

Sh. Jawahar Thakur, Sh. M. J. Joseph, Sh. S. M. Kumar, Sh. S. K. Jana, Sh. P. Sudhir Kumar, Smt. Archana Nigam, esteemed former CGAs and Addl. CGAs, other serving and retired officers of the Civil Accounts Service, officials of the Civil Accounts Organisation, colleagues and friends.

Today, we are here to celebrate the completion of thirty six years of the Department and the Indian Civil Accounts Service; my thoughts go back to the year 1976 when we began our journey and I am reminded of what Vincent Van Gogh once said:

“Great things are not done by impulse, but by a series of small things brought together”.

While we commemorate this occasion formally today, we can be justifiably proud of all that we have achieved and where we are today. Our coming together every year to mark this occasion and renew our commitment towards our vision to strengthen governance through excellence in public financial management, is a tradition and a declaration of our strength of purpose and dynamism, a statement that we are second to none. This gathering is a reaffirmation of the bonds that hold us all together and an assertion of our determination to scale even greater heights.

Over the years, the Indian Civil Accounts Organisation has gone from strength to strength and has succeeded in putting in place a credible financial reporting system, one that not only ensures seamless flow of information but also empowers policy makers at various levels and supports good governance.

The year gone by has been marked by significant achievements in different areas of our work which will no doubt yield tangible results. The Organisation enunciated and declared its Vision and Mission statement thus formally charting out a course for the medium to long term. While all of you have been involved in the process of drawing up the Vision and Mission statement, I would exhort you to remember that our Vision statement is a symbol of our aspirations and our dreams, it is the essence of what we are, it is what defines us. And it is non negotiable. It is to be articulated clearly and forcefully by us on every occasion since it is our driving force.

We also followed up on the excellent work done at the workshop at Manesar last year. A report on the work done as a follow up on the recommendations made at Manesar has already been presented to you at our workshop this year at Sariska in January.

The High Power Committee on Government Performance has included the office of the Controller General of Accounts in the exercise of formulating the Result

Framework Document (RFD) for the year 2012-13. The guidelines for drafting the RFD contain some mandatory success indicators one of which is to make a strategic plan for the next five years. Since the strategy is a practical tool for achieving our Vision, our endeavour was to capture the mood and momentum generated at the last workshop at Manesar. This January therefore we again came together for a workshop at Sariska aimed at a brainstorming for a strategic plan document.

It was heartening to witness the enthusiastic participation of all officers at the workshop at Sariska and for the benefit of those of you who were not there I must mention that I was greatly encouraged by the quality of debate and discussion and the presentations that showcased the effort put in by each group. To take forward the views that emerged from our deliberation during the three day workshop, two Working Groups have been constituted to suggest a road map for moving ahead on this critical path.

In the wake of emerging requirements for more effective accounting information to be used for better planning and resource allocation, a Committee was constituted by the Government of India to review the present accounting classification system and to develop a system better suited to display the nature and objective of Government expenditure. The Committee submitted its report on 25 Jan 2012 to the Hon'ble Finance Minister. The Committee chaired by me, had representation

from the Budget Division, Ministry of Finance, Planning Commission, C&AG, state Government of Assam, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra and the National Institute for Public Finance & Policy, New Delhi.

The new classification structure aims to address all issues related to critical information requirements of the Government and would be an effective tool for establishing a robust public financial management system. The structure has been so designed that it can be applied to state governments as well, allowing for enough flexibility and it has been ensured that transition to the new system is less arduous by realigning the top three layers of the existing system with some additions and a new set of standard codes. With this, a need long felt, for a system better suited to display the nature and objective of Government expenditure, has been met. The new classification structure is proposed to be introduced from the financial year 2013-14 and we are working on a proposal to hold workshops on the proposed structure for officers of our field formations beginning from this month. I am confident that I have the committed resolve of all officers and staff of our Organisation to rise up to the challenge of implementing the revised system.

The inauguration in October 2011 of the e-Payment system by the Hon'ble Finance Minister underscores our commitment towards improvements in business processes and shift towards 'e' mode to replace manual systems that I mentioned in my Keynote address at the Civil Accounts Day 2011. The facility in COMPACT

for electronic payment through digitally signed electronic advises will replace the existing system of payment through cheques across all Pay & Accounts Offices, in a phased manner. The e-payment system developed is a fully secured web based system of electronic payment services which introduces transparency in the government payments system by crediting the money directly into the bank account of the payee through the Government e payment Gateway (GePG) on a secured communication channel. The GePG portal developed by the office of the CGA serves as middleware between COMPACT application at the Pay & Accounts Office and the Core Banking Solution of the banks/RBI. The advantages of the e payment system are many in terms of time saving, transparency, efficiency etc. I must congratulate those of you who have succeeded through dint of hard work, in endeavouring to meet the timelines set by CGA office. Special mention must be made of Ministry of Health & Family Welfare who achieved the target within the time frame.

I am happy to inform you that the implementation of the e payment system has been taken as one of the action points by the Committee of Secretaries on good governance and reduction of corruption. I may also inform you that the Controller General of Defence Accounts has requested our office to allow them to use the GePG for five of their Principal Controllers of Defence Accounts and Controllers

of Defence Accounts on a pilot basis. This land mark achievement will enhance the visibility of our Organisation and is a step towards our Vision.

It gives me great pleasure to inform you that the Central Plan Scheme Monitoring System (CPSMS) being implemented by our organization has successfully completed the pilots covering four flagship schemes in four states. It has therefore been decided that CPSMS shall be rolled out across all states in the 12th Plan period to cover all Plan Schemes to usher in the next level of expenditure management reforms.

I expect that the EFC shall approve the DPR prepared by the consultants and we will soon be in a position to report on releases and expenditure under all developmental schemes. I also hope that information available with us shall soon be placed in the public domain and that shall, no doubt, contribute enormously to increasing transparency in government operations. While there is much to rejoice, there is no room for complacency as the task ahead is challenging and one that shall require ingenuity, perseverance and diligence in equal measure. We have it in us to live up to the expectations and hence we must ensure that we deliver in an exemplary manner.

Strengthening internal audit mechanism in Government of India is an important recommendation of the second Administrative Reforms Commission which has

been accepted by Government. Our “Vision and Mission Statement”, too mentions development of new paradigms of internal audit for improved transparency and accountability as a key objective of the Organisation.

This requires a new approach to internal audit. To equip our officers with new concepts and skills, and to strengthen internal audit in central civil ministries, various initiatives have been taken in the last one year. These include efforts at (i) Capacity Building and (ii) Leveraging technology for an efficient internal audit mechanism. Over 200 officials have been trained in the concepts of Risk Based Internal Audit and several Group A & B officers are slated to acquire the specialty certification in Government Auditing.

While these efforts will be sustained, Internal Audit needs to be accorded more attention than has been done in the past. CCAs/ CAs have a definite leadership role in this area. It is also important that more and more Group A and Group B officers acquire professional certification in this field to provide effective leadership.

The Organization remains committed to training and capacity building needs of the employees and our new training initiatives are aimed at significantly enhancing our professional expertise. The two month training course for AAOs in Accounts, Finance and Internal Audit at NIFM and the internal audit modules for AAOs at INGAF have been well attended by officials from Delhi as well as other regions.

The process of assessing feedback from all stake holders on the various courses is also in hand in an effort to further fine tune the programmes both in terms of content and delivery. The firm foundation provided by a well trained work force cannot be over stressed and I am sure each one of you realizes its critical role.

For the Group 'A' officers, the Advanced Management Development Program for senior officers was instituted this year in collaboration with NIPFP, apart from a number of nominations of ICAS offices for training within the country and abroad. We hope to continue these programs on a regular basis and widen their scope and reach.

As in the past, INGAF has been at the forefront, garnering all their resources to deliver on their mandate of quality training through all its centres. I have already mentioned the advanced MDP conducted in association with NIPFP. INGAF has been conducting induction training of both the direct recruit as well as inducted ICAS officers, induction and mid career training programmes for Sr AOs, AAOs, and Accountants. Training programmes and workshops in Internal Audit, IT, CPSMS, e payment system, e DDG, Audit Para Monitoring System were some of the other focus areas of INGAF during the year. In their International programmes, approximately 150 officers from AGAOA member countries and others have been trained at INGAF. Their efforts towards preparatory classes for officials appearing for the AAO exam have shown excellent results.

I may share with you that the training policy for the officers of ICAS is at an advanced stage of consideration between the CGA's office and Ministry of Finance. The training policy for the Group B & C officers is also at advanced stage of preparation and we hope to announce that also at an early date.

We have had some success with the cadre restructuring of Group B and C, with staff augmentation taking place mainly in CBDT, CPAO, MHA and some others. Taken together the number of posts at the level of Pay & Accounts Officer, Assistant Accounts Officer and Accountants, is about 664. Many other proposals have already received 'in principle' approval from us. Unfortunately the recent economy instructions mean that we have to wait for some time before moving these proposals for approval of Ministry of Finance. In the meantime norms have been developed for augmentation of staff for the internal audit function in Ministries and the same are being circulated. It is important that this assessment for requirement of staff for internal audit is completed at the earliest.

Given the large vacancies at the AAO level, a special AAO exam was conducted last year and 107 candidates passed the exam. In the regular AAO Exam for 2011 this year, results for which were declared recently, 154 candidates have passed the exam. We have also sought to alleviate the difficulty faced by our offices owing to the large number of vacancies in the grade of Assistant Accounts Officers by

taking on deputation persons from Delhi Government. I am informed that approximately eighty such officials have joined.

The modalities for creating a separate database for Group A and Group B officers of the cadre are in place. The completion of the project will require active cooperation from all of you. These databases have been a long felt need within the Organization and will go a long way in ensuring better cadre management across the Organization.

The cadre restructuring of Group A has taken longer than we had anticipated. I would like to assure you that all out efforts are being made to bring it to fruition and we hope that it will be approved soon.

During the year we took possession of our new office building and worked out the modalities for the interiors with the Central Public Works Department of the Ministry of Urban Development. The tendering formalities are in hand presently and we hope to shift into the new office premises by early next year. Meanwhile CPSMS project has been allotted space in Shivaji stadium.

It was Henry Drummond, a 19th century English banker and Parliamentarian who said:

“Unless a man undertakes more than he possibly can do, he will never do all that he can”.

Our endeavours towards realising our vision and mission have to continue and we must strive to attain even greater heights. How we do this, the path that we choose and the choices that we make, will determine the course of our future. Clearly, before us are two choices: to accept conditions as they exist or to accept the responsibility of changing them. **Carpe diem**-seize the day, and not **que sara sara** should be our tune! Let us dictate our future. Let us not be silent spectators of our destiny, instead let us come together and walk as one. I am sure that if move professionally in the path set for us, in our “Vision & Mission Statements, we can keep the flag of the Indian Civil Accounts organization flying high.

As was done last year, this year too the Organisation is acknowledging the hard work and effort of staff and officers by awarding those Pay & Accounts Offices who have excelled against a set of quantifiable parameters. We also continue to felicitate those who have displayed initiative and innovativeness with the “CGA Best Practices Award”. Let me also congratulate the Pr CCAs, CCAs and CAs under whom these Pay & Accounts Offices are working for the performance of their officials.

For those of you within the Organisation who have not made the cut, I implore you not to lose heart but to redouble your efforts. Let us not be discouraged by what we could not accomplish in this year gone by. Let us instead, as Franklin D. Roosevelt said, keep our eyes on the stars and our feet on the ground. Let us

remember that a man, who does things, makes many mistakes, but he never makes the biggest mistake, doing nothing.

Last but not the least, I would like to put on record my appreciation for the good work done by the officers and staff of CGA's office and INGAF who were not covered by the parameters laid down for consideration for an Award but they have made valuable and immense contribution in the achievements of the organization. I have received references from some offices to broaden the scope of the parameters for Award so as to include the CGA's office, INGAF as well as the Pr. Accounts Offices who are presently covered under the Best Practices Awards only. We are examining the proposal and let us hope that we would be able to recognize their contribution suitably in the Civil Accounts Day function for 2013.

I wish all members of the Civil Accounts family the best on this occasion.