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PAPER CLIPPINGS

ಇಲಾಖೆ / ವಿಷಯ : DEPARTMENT / SUBJECT: D.P.A.R.

ಪತ್ರಿಕೆಯ ಹೆಸರು : NAME OF THE NEWS PAPER: The Hindu

ದಿನಾಂಕ : DATE: 26/02/2020

Administrative reforms in State on the cards

5-member Cabinet sub-committee to take a call

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The State administration could be in for rationalisation in the near future with the merger of some departments and removal of cadres that do not fit, besides the transfer of officials from over-staffed to under-staffed departments.

Secretariat sources confirmed that discussions have been taking place on the merger of departments to help ensure better functioning. Departments like the sericulture one have field staff beyond the traditional mulberry growing area where there is 'hardly any work,' while the Agriculture Department has nearly 50% staff shortage on field and is struggling to maintain Krishi Samparka Kendras that are of utmost importance to reach programmes to farmers, sources said.

While the Treasury Department with more work is



The latest move on reforms comes years after the recommendations made by the Karnataka ARC. ■ FILE PHOTO

struggling with staff shortage, staff in the small savings directorate, KGID and others where work has reduced, can be merged, sources said. "With promotions happening, many departments are also facing shortage of staff at the field level, hampering the implementation of government work," they pointed out.

When the matter came up before the last Cabinet, it was decided to set up a five-member Cabinet sub-committee to study the issue and report to the government. "The positives of many recommenda-

tions of the Karnataka Administrative Reforms (ARC) Commission headed by the late Harnahalli Ramaswamy that were implemented, have been nullified over the years. Bureaucracy needs to be made effective," said a Cabinet Minister.

Incidentally, the latest move on administrative reforms comes nearly two decades after the recommendations made by Karnataka ARC. The recommendation of 6th Pay Commission had also included rationalisation to boost efficiency.

"The matter was taken up

Crunching numbers

- Total number of sanctioned posts in State government: 7.65 lakh
- Total number of filled posts: 5.26 lakh
- Number of departments: 64
- Government's annual expenditure on salary/pensions: About ₹65,000 cr.
- Karnataka Administrative Reforms Commission, headed by former Minister late Harnahalli Ramaswamy, was set up in 2000 to bring administrative efficiency and reduce corruption

informally during the Cabinet meeting, but received good support with many Ministers acknowledging the need for reforms in bureaucracy that led to the formation of the sub-committee," a Minister told The Hindu. He said at least ₹65,000 crore of the total budget size of ₹2.34 crore goes towards the payment of salaries and pension. It was imperative that the work has to be rationalised. "For example, in the engi-

neering cadre, there is huge duplication of work with several engineers from different departments doing the same work when one engineer could do all of it. These are highly-paid engineers but under-employed due to wrong postings."

The Minister further pointed out the problem in Indian Forest Service officers deployment. "The allotment of IFS to a State is based on the extent of forests. In Karnataka, due to the increased number of IFS officials, we have IFS officers deployed to universities, academies and zilla panchayats, among other places. What does forest official have to do with these postings?"

Sources said that the Department of Personnel and Administrative Reforms (DPAR) has now sought the opinion of several departments before it issues the order. "It is still not clear whether a commission will be set up or the Cabinet sub-committee will deal with the matter. The current inclination is to set up a committee," an official said.