

Seventh Pay Commission chairman finds discrepancy between IAS and non-IAS glaring

By [Shantanu Nandan Sharma](#), ET Bureau | 20 Dec, 2015, 04.00AM IST

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Justice Ashok Kumar Mathur, chairman of the Seventh Pay Commission, tells *ET Magazine* in this exclusive interview that he was up against various demands from all the services. And that he tried hard but couldn't succeed in bringing Commission member Vivek Rae on board before recommending an end of IAS supremacy. Edited excerpts:

As the Seventh Central Pay Commission (CPC) report reflects, there were serious differences between you and one member of the Commission on key issues such as IAS retaining its edge over other civil servants. Why did you fail to build a consensus?

We had a consensus in most of our recommendations barring maybe a couple of them. It is a 900-page report. In most of the recommendations, there was total consensus. As far as equalising the IPS (Indian Police Service) and IFoS (Indian Forest Service) with IAS (Indian Administrative Service) was concerned, one member of the Commission gave a dissent note. Look, IPS and IFoS are all-India services like that of an IAS. The statistics will tell you how challenging their job is. Many police and forest officers get killed in operations. So, why not giving the same pay and promotion avenues to them?

But finally one member Vivek Rae gave a long dissent note arguing for status quo. Why could you not build a consensus so that it would have been easier for the government to take a call in implementing your recommendation?

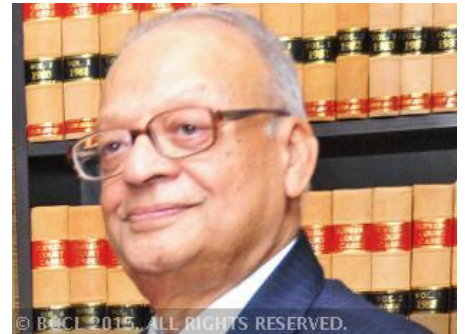
I tried to convince Vivek Rae. He is a former secretary to the government of India and has very long experience in the government. When I could not convince him, we decided I and the two members would put our arguments separately. Let the government take the final call. I felt that there is a lot of angst among civil servants across services against the IAS and their superiority. Even the other member Rathin Roy had a similar view. We noticed in our interactions that the non-IAS officers were peeved at the way the colonial hangover of Indian Civil Service (ICS later became IAS) still remains. IAS Association told us that we should not go beyond recommending the pay structure. But we found that many service matters are actually interlinked to pay. Non-IAS officers don't get promotions on time, and that has a bearing on their pay. Earlier pay commissions too looked into the matter, but I decided to call a spade a spade. I sensed the IPS, IFoS and other Group "A" services were really agitated about the way they were discriminated in promotion. I thought this needs to end. After all, if most bureaucrats belonging to various services remain unhappy, it will impact governance. So, I recommended there should be no discrimination.

The Pay Commission is going to put a huge burden on the state exchequer. Did you take into account the possible burden on the government finances when you decided on a pay hike?

Of course, we did. That's why we could not make everyone happy. Everyone wanted a huge hike. Revenue Service officers, for example, wanted a huge hike because the revenue collection was going up. But we did not go by their argument. It's their job (to get more revenues), I said. There were many other demands from all services. We can't give everything to everyone. If we conceded, the government of India will go bankrupt. Even then, if our recommendations are accepted as they are, the government will need `1,02,100 crore. That's a huge burden.

If I ask you about one or two recommendations that you were very satisfied with, what would those be?

Our recommendation on the pension for defence personnel is a very satisfying one. We prepared a matrix that takes care of the need of the defence personnel who have been demanding OROP (One Rank One Pension). Also, we recommended a level playing field among all civil servants after the completion of 17 years in service. When they are eligible to be joint secretaries in the government of India, there should be a transparent screening process so that only the brighter lot gets selected. Another highlight of our report is that we rationalised allowances. Never before have allowances been scrutinised the way we did. Out of 190, we found many were outdated. They outlived



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Armed forces personnel will now get a pay much higher than their civilian counterparts. For them, there is no deduction for future pension (unlike other civil servants): **Justice Ashok Kumar Mathur**, chairman of the Seventh Pay Commission

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their utilities. Why should anyone have a `5 haircutting allowance? We have either abolished those or merged with other allowances.

Armed forces officers are not very happy with the recommendations...

We only stopped free-food allowances in peace areas, that too only for officers, not for jawans (for PBOR, i.e. Personnel Below Officer Rank). But overall we gave them a very good deal. Armed forces personnel will now get a pay much higher than their civilian counterparts. For them, there is no deduction for future pension (unlike other civil servants). We also increased their MSP (military service pay). I myself visited Siachen and witnessed the hardship faced by the armed personnel. We have liberally increased high-altitude allowances. I feel very sad to hear that many of them are still not happy.

Any regrets?

It's Dil Maange More for everyone in the government. I wish I could make everyone happy.

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