

No.46011/1/2008-O&M
Government of India
Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances
(e-Governance Division)

5th Floor, SP Bhawan, Sansad Marg
New Delhi, dated the 17 June, 2009

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

E-Office is one the Mission Mode Projects (MMP) under the National e-Governance Plan of Government of India which is aimed at significantly improving the operational efficiency of Central Government Ministries and Departments through improvement in the workflow mechanisms and associated office procedure manuals. The Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances (DARPG) is the nodal agency for implementing the project. "e-Office" or any less-paper initiative primarily involves workflow automation and knowledge management including document/records management, setting and controlling the workflow in the organization, work allocation and tracking, maintaining audit trails, performance benchmarking and generating operational MIS.

2. The objectives of this project are:

- To improve efficiency, consistency and effectiveness of government responses;
- To reduce turnaround time and to meet the demands of the citizens charter;
- To provide for effective resource management for improving the quality of administration;
- To reduce processing delays and
- To establish transparency and accountability

3. The Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances had set up a Committee to finalize the draft of the "e-Manual" defining office procedures to be followed during the implementation of the e-Office system. This Committee has now submitted a draft "e-Manual", a copy of which (without appendices) is attached herewith.

4. All the Ministries/Departments are requested to kindly furnish their comments for improvement, (if any) in the draft e-Manual.

5. A reply is requested within one month.

Sey (EP) in meeting

To
Secretaries of all Ministries/Departments

(S. K. Gupta)
Deputy Secretary
Tel.No.23362325

~~JS (AKG)~~

4995/1/R
19/6/09

O/o J. S. (AKG)
Dy. No. 4995/Secy
Date 19.06.09

Discussed
with JS (AKG).
prep and
etc cannot
within 15 days.

O/o D. S. (G. S.)
Dy. No. 1232
Date 22/6/09

S4. BPP

24.6.09

50/225/09
23/6/09

DS (AC)

scam

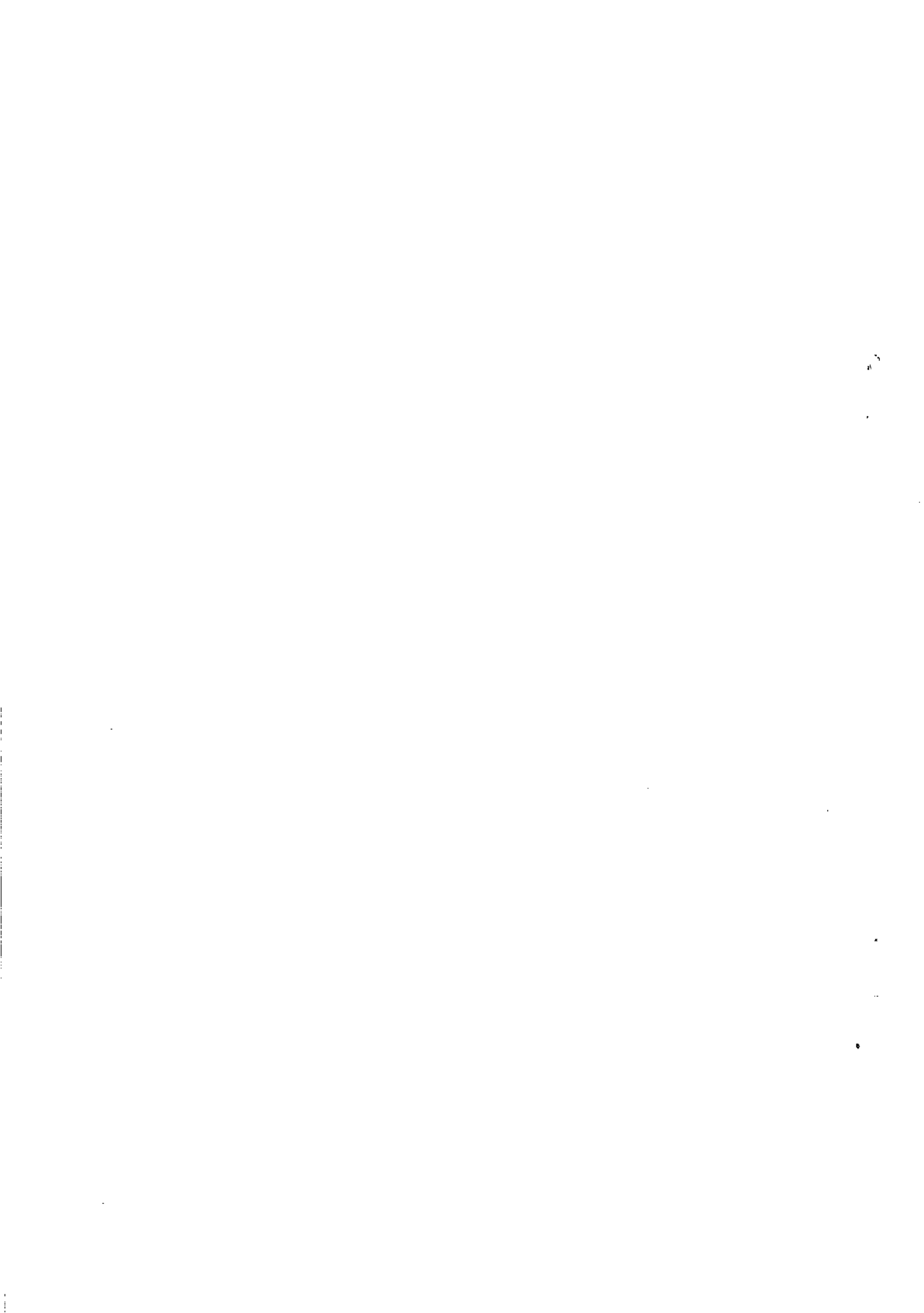
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M. D. P. U.

and 20/06/09

J. S. (AKG)

20/6



**CENTRAL SECRETARIAT MANUAL
OF
e-OFFICE PROCEDURE**

DRAFT OF THE FIRST EDITION

**Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances
and Pensions**

Department of Administrative Reforms & PG

8th June, 2009

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APPENDICES

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

A. Augmentation in the manual over its previous version

The procedures prescribed in this manual intend to enable the office procedures in ICT (Information and Communication Technology) enabled environment. This manual takes care of the present scenario demanding simplified, responsive, effective and transparent working of government offices with the help of state of art cost effective technologies available in the market.

The procedures have been improved keeping the core spirit of previous manual in consideration but incorporating procedures to support electronic environment and introducing transformational opportunities after due deliberations.

The procedures in the manual will be improvement over previous system with respect to

- **Responsiveness**

- The activities shall be automated as far as possible and will lead to saving in process time in transfer of files and retrieval of information to deal with any case/ file.
- The file contents such as reference books, correspondences, draft for approval, appendix etc will get automatically arranged and numbered as per defined rules for filing.

- **Effectiveness**

- Duplication of work shall be eliminated wherever possible for example drafting and then redrafting, duplication of paragraph in communications etc.
- The efficient acquisition, preservation and retrieval for long term record management will improve the quality of work done by various offices.
- The readability will improve because of common editor and will result in tidy presentation of cases.
- Flexibility of roles among officials to cater to dynamic needs of any department.

- **Security and confidentiality**
 - Improved security of efiles will be possible with the help of modern security services offered by specialized software packages.
 - Further the digital signature technology will help in proper authentication and possible usage and legality of efiles on par with paper files/ documents

- **Transparency**
 - The information will be suitably managed and will be made amenable for direct public access and publishing on public portals.
 - The file tracking inside office could also be made transparent to public/ client to enable them to know the status of the relevant case/ files.

- **Cost reduction**
 - The new system will considerably reduce paper cost and cost of maintaining records.

- **Scalability**
 - The system will have all the flexibility and scalability to support the volume of work at any point of time. This will enable setting up of any new office or to quickly scale up volume of work dealt by any existing department, as and when the need arises in response to the changing environment.

- **Performance orientation and accountability**
 - Online availability of Performance Management System, dashboards, alerts etc will enable in self assessment and better planning of work. The system will have provision for incorporating suitable performance measures at activity, process or department level and monitored automatically (without any bias) to help sustain the system improvement process.

- **Modern office environment**
 - Facelift of traditional offices will be the natural outcome of the system.
 - Provision of net meeting and video conferencing

Key changes over previous editions are as follows:

- Processes to support the electronic file processing: This will include definition of activities to ingest/ digitally capture all modes of inbound information/ receipts including e-mails. Digital signature and record management and archival process have also been accordingly defined. Further, there will no need to bifurcate bulky files since only set of pointers will get passed with transfer of files. (Digital Signatures – Point 26 (at page no. 15) plus para 13 to 16 (page 28 to 31) plus para 93 (page 77).
- Same file/ document could be put in multiple processes simultaneously without any hassles since the system will eliminate need of physical linking and de-linking of files. There will be provision of linking with precedence cases, relevant rules (in library) etc. [Para 42 (at page No. 44) & paras 35 (2) & 35 (3) at page 42]
- Efficiency in handling communication: Procedure of official communication and its management has been substantially simplified with the help of system.[Chapter IV (at page 28 to 31)]
- Standardization of routine tasks through transactional operations: e.g. regular reporting, checks and verification etc. [Chapter XIV (at page no. 83 to 89)]
- Improved Knowledge Management Practices: The system will have provision of library of widely used documents such as rules, acts, standing orders etc. to available online with all the officials. All the documents and records in the system will be suitably structured to allow effective search. Paras 35 (2) and (3) (at page no. 42)
- The records will be maintained electronically with the help of ICT system. Record Management – Chapter XII page 72
- Capable to ^{of} measure ⁱⁿ performance: System will have provisions and flexibility to define and automatically measure performance indices at suitable level to motivate performance oriented environment. [Chapter XIV (at page 83 to 87)]
- Introduction of Standard Taxonomy: The standard taxonomy across all the departments/ ministries will be mandated. The taxonomy will be defined, authorized and controlled centrally

for effective exchange of information and integrated knowledge management. Chapter XI (at page 68 to 71)

- Taxonomy will be defined for files, receipts (inbound information), Demi-Official Letter, Office Memorandum, Inter-departmental Note, Telegram, Office Order, Resolution, Press Note, Endorsement, Circular, Advertisement etc. Chapter XI (at page 68 to 71)
- System controlled versioning of library items to make available the latest rules, acts, orders, circulars etc online. [Para 35 (2) and 35 (3) (at page no. 42)]
- Provision of Automatic Accountability trail: This will completely eliminate the laborious task of maintaining diaries, movement registers etc. [Para 83 on page 71] plus [Explanation 2 on page 29] plus para 16 (7) at page 31]
- Provision of flexible MIS and Dashboards. Para 117 (at pages 85 to 87)
- Provision of effective means of collaboration/ consultation like net meeting, video-conferencing. The discussions and minutes could be effectively captured in the system so that it should be able to considerably reduce the need of physical meetings. Para 131 (at page 93)
- Priority/ urgency/ importance grading of files/ cases could be managed at authorized/ appropriate level to improve and aligned prioritization of work in the department/ministries. (Para 43 (4) [page 45])
- Visibility of pending work at all levels. Automatic alerts based on predefined rules will be introduced. Para 117 (at pages 86 to 88)
- Provision of incorporating operating module to help processes. These modules may be developed and integrated on need basis and will have features like automatic calculation and presentation of data/ information in formats conducive for decision making. Para 117 (at pages 86 to 88)
- Provision of draft templates, standard phraseology and taxonomy for various communications like DO letter, office order, circular etc. [Para 48 (at pages 48 to 51) and para 133 (at pages 93 and 94)]

B. Background to the manual

The efficiency of an organization, to a large extent, depends on evolution of adequate processes and procedures and the ability of its employees to follow them. Accordingly, the efficiency of persons handling secretarial work in an organization can be judged by their ability to dispose of receipts with speed, following the procedures prescribed for the purpose. The ultimate object of all Government business is to meet the citizens' needs and to further their welfare without undue delay. At the same time, those who are accountable for the conduct of that business have to ensure that public funds are managed with utmost care and prudence. It is, therefore, necessary, in each case, to keep appropriate record not only of what has been done but also of why it was so done.

The procedures prescribed in this manual, attempt to balance the conflicting considerations of speed and propriety. In a dynamic context, this balance cannot be rigidly or permanently fixed. Every rule and step in the procedure must serve a definite purpose and must meet these tests: Is it necessary? Is it sufficient? Is there any quicker way which would serve the purpose?

In order to create awareness about these processes and practices at the cutting-edge level and to sensitize the new entrants inducted at various levels in the Central Secretariat, the Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances, as a nodal agency in the field of 'Organization & Methods', has laid down various procedures for performance of secretariat work by the functionaries in various Ministries/ Departments of the Government of India in the form of this manual

Newly inducted staff should be trained on the procedures contained in the manual and refresher courses too should be organized.

A well designed procedure serves as a standing order, the manual will; therefore, continue to form the back-bone of process management in the Central Secretariat.

C. Structure of the Manual

The manual consist of five basic components:

- Generic Process description

- Added Functionalities under e-Office
- Administrative Guidelines
- Guidelines for Core Operations under e-Office
- Prescribed forms/ templates

• In regard to the process descriptions under this manual, it describes the generic processes to be followed across departments in all the central government offices. The department specific processes will be built on this generic office processes framework by the respective departments, such that nothing is in contravention of the intent laid down in this manual. The generic office processes has been described under two broad head, viz. Correspondence & eFile Management Process and Records Management Process.

The chapters on added functionalities under e-Office comprise Management Information System, Knowledge Management and Governance Reforms. These chapters give a brief description of how the e-Office application could help the initiator, processor and decision maker in not only performing their daily operations but also in review and monitoring.

Administrative guidelines cover the areas of Security and Audit, System administrator and Applicability of CSMOP.

The correspondence and e-File management process has been broken down into specific operations. To prescribe a common platform for these operations across departments, this manual provides for certain guidelines.

In addition to the above, the following chapters have been added to the CSMOP:

1. Governance reforms
2. Security of e-Information / Documents
3. System Administrator

Also, the following chapters have been deleted from the CSMOP as they were not relevant post introduction of IT system:

1. Office automation

2. Electronically supported office procedures system

Apart from the Chapters, certain definitions and terminologies also have been added, these are, Accountability trail, Capture, Classification, Destruction, Dispose / Close, Document, e-File, Electronic document, e-Office, Export, Extract, Final Disposals, Fresh Receipt, HTML, Hybrid e-file, Metadata, MIS Dashboard, Open, System Administrator, User, Version, Portal and Extensible Markup Language (XML)

The annexure on forms and templates lays down the standard format of various data fields arranged into a particular order/ sequence to achieve the ultimate objective of removing duplication and increasing efficiency.

CHAPTER II

DEFINITIONS

1. *Special meanings* - Special meanings to be attached to some of the terms used in the manual are given below:-
 1. 'Appendix to correspondence' in relation to a file means lengthy enclosures to a communication (whether receipt or issue) on the file, inclusion of which in the correspondence portion is likely to obstruct smooth reading of the correspondence or make the correspondence portion unwieldy.
 2. 'Appendix to notes' in relation to a file means a lengthy summary or statement containing detailed information concerning certain aspects of the question discussed on the file, incorporation of which in the main note is likely to obscure the main point or make the main note unnecessarily lengthy.
 3. 'Accountability trail' means a record showing who has accessed a computer system and what operations he or she has performed during a given period of time.
 4. 'Branch officer' in relation to a section means the officer who is directly above the section in the line of control for execution of work.
 5. 'Capture' means registration, classification, addition of metadata and storage of a file and /or record in a system that manages them all.
 6. 'Case' means a current file or a receipt together with other related papers, if any.
 7. 'Central issue section' means the unit within a department responsible for typing of drafts, comparing of fair copies, preparation of pads for signature and despatch of communication to the addressees and includes functionaries like resident clerk and night duty clerk. In departments where centralised typing pool does not exist in central issue section, this section will be responsible only for despatch of signed communications to the addressees.
 - a) 'Central receipt and issue section' means a unit within a department consisting of the central registry and the central issue section.
 - b) 'Central registry' means a unit within a department charged with the responsibility of receiving, registering and converting physical dak into electronic dak. The unit shall electronically distribute dak meant for that department. It includes functionaries like

data entry operator, computer literate night duty clerk and operator to run the scanner, Photostat machine and fax..

8. 'Classification' means systematic identification and arrangement of business activities and / or records into categories according to logically structured conventions, methods and procedures.
9. 'Classified dak' means dak bearing a security grading.
10. Citizen's/Client's Charter is a document which represents a systematic effort to focus on the commitment of the Organisation towards it's Citizens/Clients in respect of Standard of Services, Information, Choice and Consultation, Non-discrimination and Accessibility, Grievances Redress, Courtesy and Value for Money. This also includes expectations of the Organisation from the Citizen/Client for fulfilling the commitment of the Organisation.
11. 'Come-back case' means a case received back for further action such as re-examination or preparing a draft or a summary of the case.
12. 'Correspondence portion' in relation to a file means the portion containing 'receipts' and office copies of 'issue' pertaining to the file including self-contained inter-departmental notes but excluding those recorded on the notes portion of the file itself.
13. 'C.R. No.' means the serial number electronically generated by the system at the central registry. This unique number is assigned to each of the dak received.
14. 'Current file' means a file action on which has not been completed.
15. 'Dak' includes every type of written communication such as letter, telegram, interdepartmental note, file, fax, e-mail, wireless message or a message through SMS or portal which is received, whether by post or otherwise, in any department for its consideration. Physical dak refers to the dak received in paper form (letter/fax/telegram/ID Note/physical file/wireless message). All the other dak shall be referred to as electronic dak/ Non Physical dak
16. 'Dealing hand' means any functionary such as lower division clerk, an upper division clerk, an assistant, entrusted with initial examination and noting upon cases.
17. 'Department' means any of the ministries, departments, secretariats and offices mentioned in the First Schedule to the Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules.

18. 'Departmental index' means a consolidated electronic index of files opened by different sections of a department during a year (except those of a classified nature or those proposed to be retained for less than 10 years) arranged in a single series in the alphabetical order of the catchwords under which they have been indexed.
19. 'Departmental instructions' means instructions issued by a department to supplement or vary the provisions of the Manual of Office Procedure.
20. 'Departmental Record Officer (DRO)' means the officer nominated by the records creating agency for overall records management.
21. 'Desk' is an officer-oriented work unit within a department with a specific task assigned to it.
22. 'Desk functionary' means an officer assigned a well-defined sub-function or activity in the charge of desk.
23. 'Diarist' means a functionary within a section/CR unit/personal staff section of Ministers/Secretaries etc. charged with the responsibility *inter alia* of maintaining the register of Dak.
24. 'Diarising' means registration of receipts in the electronic section diary as well as in the electronic diary register with the Personal Staff of Officers.
25. 'Diary number' means the serial number electronically assigned to a receipt in the section diary/Personal Staff of Officers followed by code letters identifying the section diary ('H' for section diary for Hindi receipt and 'O' for section diary for other receipts)/Officer's designation, the year and the abbreviated symbol of the section, e.g., 205-H/2001-O&M or 123/DS (O&M)/2001.
26. 'Digital signature' means authentication of any electronic record by a subscriber by means of an electronic method.
27. 'Dispose/ Close' means the process of changing the attributes of an electronic file or record so that it is no longer able to accept the addition of records.
28. 'Division' is a unit of a Wing within a Department. A division may comprise a number of branches.
29. 'Docketing' means making of entries in the notes portion of a file about the serial number assigned to each item of correspondence (whether receipt or issue) for its identification.

30. 'e-File (electronic file)' is a file which is in electronic form
31. 'e-Office' means a system that provides electronic way of doing work for a public servant which includes the elements like Workflow Automation, Document and Knowledge Management and leads to less paper office.
32. 'Final disposal' in relation to a case under consideration means completion of all action thereon culminating, where necessary, in the issue of final orders or final reply to the party from which the original communication emanated.
33. 'Fresh receipt (FR)' means any subsequent receipt on a case which brings in additional information to aid the disposal of a paper under consideration.
34. 'Information and Facilitation Counter (IFC)' is a facility, normally set-up outside the Security Zone of Ministries/Departments/Organisations to provide information to the citizens/clients about the programmes, schemes, etc., as well as status of cases, applications, etc. IFCs are also called 'May I Help You' or 'Help' Counters in certain organizations.
35. 'Issue' means a communication issued in a case.
36. 'Issue of fair communication' includes all stages of action after the approval of a draft ending with despatch of the signed communication to the addressee, e.g., fair typing, comparing, attaching enclosures, preparing pads for signature, preparing covers, making entries in the despatch registers and messenger books, affixing stamps, where necessary.
37. 'Messenger Book' means a record, maintained in standard form O&M 13 or any other form (including electronic), of particulars of despatch of non-postal communications and their receipt by the addressees.
38. 'Metadata' is data about data. In common usage as a generic term, metadata stores data about the structure, context and meaning of data, and computers use it to help organize and interpret data, turning it into meaningful information. This is useful for indexing purpose.
39. 'Minute' means a note recorded by the President, the Vice-President, the Prime Minister or a Minister.
40. MIS dashboard – It is the snapshot of location of all the e-files and their status at any given point in time

41. 'Night Duty Clerk' means a clerk on duty outside office hours who performs the functions of the central receipt and issue section during such hours. The term includes resident clerk also.
42. 'Note' means the remarks recorded on a case to facilitate its disposal, and includes a summary of previous papers, a statement or an analysis of the questions requiring decision, suggestions regarding the course of action and final orders passed thereon.
43. 'Notes portion' in relation to an e-file means the portion containing notes or minutes recorded on a case.
44. 'Nodal Ministry/Department' is one which interacts with all other Ministries/Departments to ensure uniformity in handling of specific matters.
45. 'O&M' Unit means that unit in a Ministry/Department to which the work relating to O&M matters has been allocated (it could be Administration/Coordination Section or any other Section of the Ministry/Department).
46. 'Open' means the process of creating a new electronic file/record.
47. 'Ordinary postal dak' means postal dak for which no specific acknowledgement is obtained by the Posts offices.
48. 'Parliamentary matters' includes Parliament Questions, Assurances, etc. the manner of dealing with which is laid down in detail in the Manual "Handling of Parliament Material."
49. 'Paper under consideration (PUC)' means a receipt on a case, the consideration of which is the subject matter of the case.
50. 'Personal staff' includes private secretary, personal assistant, stenographer, assistant, clerk or any other clerical staff appointed to assist the functionary as well as the personal section of a Minister.
51. 'Portal' consists of web pages that act as a starting point for using the Web or web-based services.
52. 'Postal communication' means a communication despatched by post and includes telegram.
53. 'Postal dak' means all dak received through Posts offices.
54. 'Receipt' means dak after it has been received by the concerned section/officer.

55. 'Record clerk' means a clerk in a section responsible inter alia for looking after routine aspects of recording work.
56. 'Recording' means the process of closing a e-file after action on all the issues considered thereon has been completed, and includes operations like completing references, revising the e-file title, , recording rulings (if any) in the Precedent Book, categorising the e-file.
57. 'Reference folder' in relation to a particular subject means a folder containing copies of relevant rules, orders, instructions, etc., arranged in chronological order.
58. 'Routine note' means a note of a temporary value or ephemeral importance recorded outside the e-file, e.g., a record of casual discussion or a note on a point of secondary importance intended to facilitate consideration of the case by higher officers.
59. 'Running summary of facts' in relation to a case means a summary of the facts of the case updated from time to time to incorporate significant development as and when they take place. This may be termed 'Self Contained Note' if it figures in the notes portion of the e-file.
60. 'Secretariat Offices' are those which are responsible for formulation of the policies of the government and also for the execution and review of those policies.
61. 'Section' means the basic work unit within a department, responsible for attending to items of work allotted to it. It is generally headed by a section officer and includes 'Cells', 'Unit' and other like terms.
62. 'Sectional note' means a note recorded on only one of the many issues raised in the PUC.
63. 'Section officer' means an officer supervising a section and includes functionaries like superintendent and assistant-in-charge.
64. 'Security grading' means security marking of classified documents as 'Confidential', 'Secret', 'Top Secret' or 'Restricted'.
65. 'Standing guard e-file' on a subject means a compilation consisting of the following three parts:
 - (a) a running summary of the principles and policy relating to the subject with number and date of relevant decisions or orders quoted in margin against each;

- (b) copies of the decisions or orders referred to, arranged in chronological order; and
 - (c) Model forms of communications to be used at different stages.
66. 'Standing note' in relation to a subject means a continuing note explaining, among other things, the history and development of the policy and procedure, designed to serve as:
- (a) a complete background material for review of the existing policy or procedure;
 - (b) a brief for preparing replies to Parliament questions or notes for supplementaries thereto and
 - (c) induction or training material.
67. 'Standard process sheet' means a standard skeleton note developed for a repetitive item of work, indicating predetermined points of check or aspects to be noted upon.
68. 'Standard Taxonomy' means a classification of kinds of things (such as files etc) into groups, or even an alphabetical list
69. System Administrator means an officer / clerk responsible for maintaining and operating the IT system of e-Office system in an organization. The responsibilities of the system administrator would include monitoring security, configuration, managing allocation of user names and passwords, monitoring disk space and other resource use, performing backups, and setting up new hardware and software, whenever required.
70. 'Urgent dak' means dak marked 'immediate' or 'priority', and includes telegrams, wireless messages, telex messages, fax, etc.
71. 'User' is any person utilizing the e-Office. This may include among others Administrators, office staff, members of the training programmes, and external personnel such as auditors etc.
72. 'Version' is the state of a document at some point during its development. A version is usually one of the drafts of a document, or the final document
73. 'Wing' is a unit of the Department and may comprise a number of divisions.

CHAPTER III

MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT

2. *The President* - The executive power of the Union formally vests in the President and may be exercised by him either directly or through officers subordinate to him, in accordance with the Constitution.

3. *The Council of Ministers* -

- (1) In the exercise of his functions, the President is aided and advised by a Council of Ministers headed by the Prime Minister. In actual practice the executive power of the Union resides in the Council of Ministers.
- (2) The Council of Ministers consists of three categories of Ministers, namely:
 - (a) Cabinet Ministers;
 - (b) Ministers of State; and
 - (c) Deputy Ministers.
- (3) The Cabinet, which consists of Ministers of the first category only, is responsible for shaping the overall policies of the Government in discharging its responsibilities. It sometimes functions through its Committees.

4. *Transaction of government business* -

- (1) Among the rules issued by the President for the convenient transaction of the business of the Government, under Article 77(3) of the Constitution, are:
 - (a) The Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules; and
 - (b) The Government of India (Transaction of Business) Rules.
- (2) The Allocation of Business Rules allocates the business of the government among its different departments which are assigned to the charge of the Ministers by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister. In relation to the business allotted to a Minister, these rules also permit the association of another Minister or Deputy Minister to perform such functions as may be specifically assigned to him.

- (3) The Transaction of Business Rules seeks to define the authority, responsibility and obligations of each department in the matter of disposal of business allotted to it. While providing that the business allotted to a department will be disposed of by, or under the direction of, the Minister-in-charge, these rules also specify:
- (a) cases or classes of cases to be submitted to the President, the Prime Minister, the Cabinet or its committees for prior approval; and
 - (b) the circumstances in which the department primarily concerned with the business under disposal will have to consult other departments concerned and secure their concurrence before taking final decisions.

5. Department -

- (1) A department is responsible for formulation of policies of the government in relation to business allocated to it and also for the execution and review of those policies.
- (2) For the efficient disposal of business allotted to it, a department is divided into wings, divisions, branches and sections.
- (3) A department is normally headed by a secretary to the Government of India who acts as the administrative head of the department and principal adviser of the Minister on all matters of policy and administration within the department.
- (4) The work in a department is normally divided into wings with a Special Secretary/Additional Secretary/Joint Secretary in charge of each wing. Such a functionary is normally vested with the maximum measure of independent functioning and responsibility in respect of the business falling within his wing subject, to the overall responsibility of the Secretary for the administration of the department as a whole.
- (5) A wing normally comprises a number of divisions each functioning under the charge of an officer of the level of Director/Joint Director/Deputy Secretary. A division may have several branches each under the charge of an Under Secretary or equivalent officer.
- (6) A section is generally the lowest organisational unit in a department with a well-defined area of work. It normally consists of assistants and clerks supervised by a Section Officer. Initial handling of cases (including noting and drafting) is generally done by, assistants and clerks who are also known as the dealing hands.

- (7) While the above represents the commonly adopted pattern of organisation of a department, there are certain variations, the most notable among them being the desk officer system. In this system the work of a department at the lowest level is organised into distinct functional desks each manned by two desk functionaries of appropriate ranks e.g. Under Secretary or Section Officer. Each desk functionary handles the cases himself and is provided adequate stenographic and clerical assistance.
- (8) The other notable variation is the Integrated Headquarters of Ministry of Defence where, the Vice Chiefs of Staff, the Principal Staff Officers of the concerned branches and other appropriate authorities, exercise the powers delegated by the Raksha Mantri through the various Branches and the Directorates of the Integrated Headquarters of the Ministry of Defence.
- (9) Functions of various levels of functionaries :
- (a) *Secretary* – A Secretary to the Government of India is the administrative head of the Ministry or Department. He is the principal adviser of the Minister on all matters of policy and administration within his Ministry/Department, and his responsibility is complete and undivided.
- (b) *Special Secretary/Additional Secretary/Joint Secretary* – When the volume of work in a Ministry exceeds the manageable charge of a Secretary one or more wings may be established with Special Secretary/Additional Secretary/Joint Secretary, incharge of each wing. Such a functionary is entrusted with the maximum measure of independent functioning and responsibility in respect of all business falling within his wing subject, to the general responsibility of the Secretary for the administration of the wing as a whole.
- (c) *Director/Deputy Secretary* – Director /Deputy Secretary is an officer who acts on behalf of the Secretary. He holds charge of a Secretariat Division and is responsible for the disposal of Government business dealt within the Division under his charge. He should, ordinarily be able to dispose of the majority of cases coming upto him on his own. He should use his discretion in taking orders of the Joint Secretary/Secretary on more important cases, either orally or by submission of papers.
- (d) *Under Secretary* – An Under Secretary is in charge of the Branch in a Ministry consisting of two or more Sections and in respect thereto exercises control both in regard to the

despatch of business and maintenance of discipline. Work comes to him from the sections under his charge. As Branch Officer he disposes of as many cases as possible at his own level but he takes the orders of Deputy Secretary or higher officers on important cases.

(c) *Section Officer -*

A. *General Duties -*

- (i) Distribution of work among the staff as evenly as possible;
- (ii) Training, helping and advising the staff;
- (iii) Management and co-ordination of the work;
- (iv) Maintenance of order and discipline in the section;
- (v) Maintenance of a list of residential addresses of the Staff.

B. *Responsibilities relating to Dak -*

- (i) to go through the receipts;
- (ii) to submit receipts which should be seen by the Branch Officer or higher officers at the dak stage;
- (iii) to keep a watch on any hold-up in the movement of dak; and
- (iv) to scrutinize the section diary once a week to know that it is being properly maintained.

C. *Responsibilities relating to issue of draft -*

- (i) to see that all corrections have been made in the draft before it is marked for issue;
- (ii) to indicate whether a clean copy of the draft is necessary;
- (iii) to check whether all enclosures are attached;
- (iv) to indicate priority marking;
- (v) to indicate mode of despatch.

- D. *Responsibility of efficient and expeditious disposal of work and checks on delays*
- (i) to keep a note of important receipts with a view to watching the progress of action;
 - (ii) to ensure timely submission of arrear and other returns;
 - (iii) to ensure that cases are not held up at any stage;
 - (iv) to go through the list of periodical returns every week and take suitable action on items requiring attention during next week.
- E. *Independent disposal of cases --*
- He should take independently action of the following types --
- (i) issuing reminders;
 - (ii) obtaining or supplying factual information of a non-classified nature;
 - (iii) any other action which a Section Officer is authorized to take independently.
- F. *Duties in respect of recording and indexing --*
- (i) to approve the recording of e-files and their categorization;
 - (ii) to review the recorded e-file before destruction;
 - (iii) ensuring proper maintenance of electronic registers required to be maintained in the section;
 - (iv) Ensuring proper maintenance of electronic version of reference books, Office Orders etc. and keep them up-to-date in the knowledge management tool ;
 - (v) Ensuring neatness and tidiness in the Section;
 - (vi) Dealing with important and complicated cases himself;
 - (vii) Ensuring strict compliance with Departmental Security Instructions.

(f) *Assistant/Upper Division Clerk* – He works under the orders and supervision of the Section Officer and is responsible for the work entrusted to him. Where the line of action on a case is clear or clear instructions have been given by the Branch Officer or higher officers, he should put up a draft without much noting. In other cases he will put up a note keeping in view the following points :-

- (i) to see whether all facts open to check have been correctly stated;
- (ii) to point out any mistakes or incorrect statement of the facts;
- (iii) to draw attention, where necessary, to precedents or Rules and Regulations on the subject;
- (iv) to put up the Guard e-file, if necessary, and supply other relevant facts and figures;
- (v) to bring out clearly the question under consideration and suggest a course of action wherever possible.

(g) *Private Secretary/Personal Assistant/Stenographer* – He will keep the officer free from routine nature of work by mailing correspondence, filing papers, making appointments, arranging meeting and collecting information so as to give the officer more time to devote himself to the work in which he has specialised. The Personal Assistant will maintain the confidentiality and secrecy of confidential and secret papers entrusted to him. He will exercise his skill in human relations and be cordial with the persons who come in contact with his superior officially or who are helpful to his superior or who have dealings with the superior as professional persons. Some of the more specific functions are enumerated below:-

- (i) scanning all the physical dak received by his superior; and putting it into the system, diarizing it & forwarding it to the functionary to whom it is marked
- (ii) taking dictation in shorthand and its transcription in the best manner possible;
- (iii) fixing up of appointments and if necessary cancelling them;
- (iv) screening the telephone calls and the visitors in a tactful manner;
- (v) keeping an accurate list of engagements, meetings etc. and reminding the officer sufficiently in advance for keeping them up;

- (vi) maintaining, in proper order, the papers required to be retained by the Officer;
- (vii) keeping a note of the movement of e-files, seen by his officer and other officers, if necessary;
- (viii) destroying the stenographic record of the confidential and secret letters by shredding etc. after these have been typed and issued;
- (ix) carrying out the corrections to the officer's reference books and making fair copies of draft demi-official letters to be signed by the officer;
- (x) generally assisting him in such a manner as he may direct and at the same time, he must avoid the temptation of abrogating to himself the authority of his superior.

(h) *Lower Division Clerk* – Lower Division Clerks are ordinarily entrusted with work of routine nature, for example registration of Dak, maintenance of Section Diary, File Register, E-file Movement Register, Indexing and Recording, typing, comparing, despatch, preparation of arrears and other statements, supervision of correction of reference books and submission of routine and simple drafts etc.

6. Attached and Subordinate offices -

(1) Where the execution of the policies of the government requires decentralisation of executive action and/or direction, a department may have under it executive agencies called 'Attached' and 'Subordinate' offices.

(2) Attached offices are generally responsible for providing executive direction required in the implementation of the policies laid down by the department to which they are attached. They also serve as repository of technical information and advise the department on technical aspects of question dealt with by them.

(3) Subordinate offices generally function as field establishments or as agencies responsible for the detailed execution of the policies of government. They function under the direction of an attached office, or where the volume of executive direction involved is not considerable, directly under a department. In the latter case, they assist the departments concerned in handling technical matters in their respective fields of specialisation.

7. *Constitutional Bodies*: Such bodies which are constituted under the provisions of the Constitution of India.
8. *Statutory Bodies*: Such bodies which are established under the statute or an Act of Parliament.
9. *Autonomous Bodies*: Such bodies which are established by the Government to discharge the activities which are related to governmental functions. Although such bodies are given autonomy to discharge their functions in accordance with the Memorandum of Associations etc., but the Government's control exists since these are funded by the Government of India.
10. *Public Sector Undertakings* – Public Sector Undertaking is that part of the industry which is controlled fully or partly by the Government. PSUs are referred to as companies in which the government (either the Union Government or state or territorial governments, or both) owned a majority (51 percent or more) of the company equity.

11. Information and Facilitation Counters (IFCs) -

The Information and Facilitation Counter will provide the following services to the clients/customers of the organization:

- (1) Information regarding services provided and programmes, schemes etc. supported by the organization and the relevant rules and procedures, through brochures, folders etc.;
- (2) Facilitating the customer/client to obtain the services of the Organisation optimally, timely, efficiently and in a transparent manner and providing forms etc. of public usage;
- (3) Information regarding the standards of quality of service, time norms, etc. evolved by the organization with reference to the services/schemes/functioning of the organization;
- (4) Information regarding hierarchical set up of Public Grievance Redress Machinery of the organization; and
- (5) Receiving, acknowledging and forwarding the grievances/application/request/form etc. (related to the services provided by the Organisation) to the concerned authority in the organization and providing information on their status/disposal.

CHAPTER IV

RECEIPT, SCANNING, DIARISATION AND DISTRIBUTION OF DAK

12. *Receipt of Dak.*-

- 1) (a) During office hours, the entire paper/ physical dak of the department including that addressed to Ministers/Officers by name will be received in the central registry/IFC. Where, however, immediate/important physical dak addressed to Ministers/Officers by name is sent through special messenger directly to the addressees themselves, it will be received by, them or their personal staff.
- (b) In case an officer is on long leave, has retired or left the office after completion of his/her tenure, the incumbent or the personal staff concerned or the officer just below the concerned officer dealing with the subject will receive the immediate/important references except confidential letters. In case none of the above mentioned officers is in position, the central registry will receive such letters. In no case immediate/important letters should be undelivered or returned.
- 2) Outside office hours, dak will be received by, the addressee himself at his residence if marked 'immediate' and addressed by name. In such cases, the officer will normally be intimated in advance over telephone about the dak being delivered at his residence. In all other cases, dak will be received, outside office hours by :-
 - (a) the night duty clerk of the department concerned, or
 - (b) where no such arrangements exist, by the officer designated by the department concerned to receive such dak.

13. Scanning of physical dak & insertion thereof into the system: The physical dak (including the fax messages) would continue to be received by various functionaries (e.g. C.R. Unit or the personal staff of the officer concerned) as in the existing system. It shall be the responsibility of the functionary who first receives the physical dak, to scan it [including the enclosures (if any)] & put the scanned copy of the dak into the system. (In case the enclosures are missing, he shall take action telephonically or electronically to obtain the enclosures from the sender, preferably in the electronic form). The functionary in the CR Unit will forward it to the concerned functionary in accordance with the work Distribution chart. In other cases the personal staff shall scan it & put the scanned copy to the officer for further directions.

14. Diarisation of dak :

- (1) The dak will be received by the concerned functionaries either in electronic form (including e-mail) or physical form (i.e. fax/letters/telegrams/ID notes/wireless messages). The dak which has been received in the physical form has been converted in the electronic form in accordance with para 13 above. Thereafter it will be diarised in the electronic form only in a pre-designed format. The system will generate a new diary number for every new item of dak. This diary number will be in a common series for the entire Ministry/Department.

Explanation 1: In the physical system the diary numbers are given by various functionaries in their independent series, e.g. 3451/Secy(Home)/2009, 2845/JS(P)/2009, 1938/Admn-II/2009 and so on. However in the e-office system the diary numbers of Ministry of Home Affairs (say) would be as follows: 2345/MHA/2009, 2378/MHA/2009 etc., etc. It may be noted that it could so happen that even if a functionary is diarising the receipts continuously, he may not get the continuous diary number from the system because some other functionary may have been also diarizing simultaneously.

Explanation 2: It needs to be amply clarified that any receipt will be diarised in the system only once, by the first receiver. It implies that if a particular receipt has been diarised in the Secretary's office, it need not be diarised again in the Office of Additional Secretary, Joint Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Under Secretary and in the concerned Section.

- (2) At the time of diarisation, the system will allow the user to diarise the receipts in separate categories such as :-
- i. court summons
 - ii. Parliament Questions,
 - iii. matters relating to Parliament, other than Parliament Questions (e.g. resolutions, cut motions)
 - iv. matters relating to various Parliamentary Committees
 - v. letters from Members of Parliament;
 - vi. matters relating to RTI, Act 2005
 - vii. communications received in Hindi language, (so as to complete the quarterly return as per the requirements of Department of Official Language)
 - viii. matters relating to Public Grievances

ix. any other category covered by departmental instructions,

15. Storage of physical dak after scanning: After the physical dak has been scanned & the scanned copy has been put into the system, the physical dak will be retained by the functionary who received it initially. He shall retain it with him in a folder after writing the computerised diary number on it. All such letters will be kept chronologically. At the end of the calendar year, the folder will be stitched & sent to the Record Room.

16. Distribution of dak -

- 1) Review the sections suggested by the system based on the metadata and forward the electronic-format of the correspondence to the respective section based on the rules for subject allocation
- 2) Rules for subject allocation are maintained by the central registry in the system in co-ordination with the Deputy Secretary/Director (Administration)
- 3) Forward the correspondence to the Deputy Secretary/Director (Administration) in case of lack of clarity on the allocation. Once assigned, the system will automatically update the rules for subject allocation
- 4) Generate the outstanding acknowledgement list from the system and send a messenger to get the acknowledgement from the sections/personal sections of the officer on the unacknowledged correspondence
- 5) The system will generate an auto-acknowledgement of each receipt, as soon as it is diarised. In case the e-mail address of the sender is available in the letter, the first receiver will send the acknowledgment to the sender electronically. In case e-mail address is not available the acknowledgment will be issued in the physical form, by the first receiver, through the CR unit in the normal course. The system will maintain a record of the acknowledgment so sent.
- 6) The official in charge of the central registry will ensure:
 - (a) that the dak shall be registered and sent as and when it is received (in case there are a number of daks received at the same time, the urgent dak shall be dealt with first)
 - (b) that, to the extent to which the above work cannot be completed during the day, and without prejudice to the processing of urgent dak, the night duty staff attends to it; and
 - (c) that the total number of receipts pending at the end of the day for registration and distribution are noted electronically and verified acknowledged online by the night duty

staff Urgent dak received outside office hours will be sent to the sections concerned if there is staff on duty. In other cases, such dak will be dealt with in accordance with the instructions issued by the department concerned.

- 7) As and when the dak is sent by one functionary to another, the system will automatically capture its following parameters so that accountability could always be ensured.
- (i) number & date of communication
 - (ii) name, designation & address of sender
 - (iii) date & time of receipt of communication by each receiver
 - (iv) each receiver's name & designation
 - (v) any other parameter which in the opinion of the department concerned is necessary.

CHAPTER V
RECEIPTS - SUBMISSION

17. Perusal and marking of receipts-

The receipts shall be received electronically by the section officer who will:

- (1) go through the receipts;
- (2) forward misdirected receipts to the sections concerned electronically;
- (3) mark and forward those receipts to the concerned officer which, either under the departmental instructions or in his discretion, should be seen by higher officers before they are processed;
- (4) mark to himself such of the remaining receipts as are of a difficult nature or present any special features requiring his personal attention;
- (5) mark and forward other receipts to the dealing hands concerned, and where necessary, indicate urgency grading and give directions regarding line of action;
- (6) flag the important receipts requiring prompt action or disposal by a specified date in the system; and
- (7) submit the case to the officer who last noted on it, if it is one returned by another department.

18. The Section Officer will review the status of the receipts every week to ensure proper monitoring. The system shall record the same in the form of Accountability trail.

19. Movement of receipts -

The Section Officer will keep a careful watch on any hold-up in the movement of receipts..

20. *Action by higher officers* - Officers to whom receipts are submitted will:

- (1) go through the receipts;

- (2) make an indication in respect of the receipts which they may like to dispose of without assistance from section or to submit to higher officers;
- (3) the system shall keep a record of the receipts mentioned in sub-para (2) above (Appendix 5);
- (4) where necessary, give directions regarding line of action to be taken on other receipts; and
- (5) return the receipts to the Section Officer for further necessary action.

21. Allocation of disputed receipts.-

If a section feels that it is not concerned with a misdirected receipt forwarded to it vide para 15 (2) the same should be brought to the notice of the officer designated by the department for deciding allocation of disputed receipts.

CHAPTER VI
ACTION ON RECEIPTS

22. General Principles.-

Action on receipts will be so organised that it results in speedy and correct decision-making process. While the detailed drill to be followed is given in the succeeding paragraphs, certain general principles to be observed in this regard are given below:

- (1) An officer will himself initiate action on as many receipts as possible, keeping in view the priority requirements.
- (2) Number of levels at which a case is examined will be reduced to the minimum.
- (3) Usage of paper will be kept at an essential minimum.
- (4) Least possible time will be taken for examination and disposal of cases.
- (5) While disposing of cases, an officer will aim at optimising the quality as well as the quantity of work performed by him.

23. Action by dealing hand.-

The dealing hand will:

- (1) go through the receipts. The system shall ensure that the receipts with urgent grading are dealt with first;
- (2) check enclosures and if any found missing, initiate action to obtain it. Wherever possible checklists shall be made to enable auto check by the system;
- (3) see whether any other section is concerned with any part or aspect of a receipt and if so, send to that section for necessary action electronically. The dealing hand may send the receipt (a copy or relevant extract) simultaneously or one after the other as mandated by the department/ division ;
- (4) Move the correspondence to a e-file

- a. If an e-file is existing for this correspondence, add the correspondence to the existing e-file.
 - b. In case such an e-file does not exist, an e-file is created by the system. Dealing hand is required to add the metadata required for creating a new e-file. A new e-file number will be assigned by the system on the creation of an e-file as per paras 76, 77 and 78.
- (5) Reproduce remarks on the notes portion of the e-file, if any, made by an officer on the receipt;
 - (6) The system will automatically assign a new serial number to the receipt, which will be affixed/displayed on the top right hand corner of the first page of the receipt, in bold and in red colour, so that it is clearly distinguishable. (It may be noted that the serial numbers of all the receipts and also the communications which are issued from a particular e-file will be in a common series.). The same serial number will also be affixed on the top of the notes, in the note sheet, to be recorded for dealing the receipt.
 - (7) With the help of knowledge management and library tools in the system locate and collect other e-files or papers, if any, referred to in the receipt, or having a bearing on the issues raised therein;
 - (8) Identify and examine the issues involved in the case and record a note vide instructions in paras 32, 33 and 34;
 - (9) Where necessary, flag the urgency grading appropriate to the case (vide para 43);
 - (10) Put up the case to the appropriate higher officer; and
 - (11) Add metadata such as due-date, priority, and noting on the e-file.

24. Action by section officer-

- (1) The Section Officer will:-
 - (a) scrutinize the note of the dealing hand;
 - (b) finally dispose of routine cases;
 - (c) take intermediate routine action;
 - (d) record, where necessary, a note setting out his own comments or suggestions; and
 - (e) submit the case to the appropriate higher officer.

- (2) What constitutes 'routine cases' or 'intermediate routine action' in terms of (b) and (c) above will be specified by each department in its departmental instructions.

25. Examination by section -

When the line of action on a receipt is obvious or is based on a clear precedent or practice, or has been indicated by a higher officer, and a communication has to issue, a draft will be put up without any elaborate note. In other cases, the section, while putting up a case, will:

- (1) see whether all the statements, so far as they are open to check, are correct;
- (2) point out mistakes, incorrect statements, missing data or information, if any
- (3) draw attention, if necessary, to the statutory or customary procedure and point out the relevant law and rules;
- (4) furnish other relevant data or information available in the department, if any;
- (5) state the questions for consideration and bring out clearly the points requiring decision;
- (6) draw attention to precedents;
- (7) evaluate relevant data and information; and
- (8) suggest, where possible, alternative courses of action for consideration.

26. Standard Process Sheet

For dealing with cases of repetitive nature standard process sheets will be devised by the respective Ministries/Departments and will be prescribed through departmental instructions and shall be made available in the system. No notes will be recorded in such cases.

27. Level of disposal and channel of submission -

- (1) An officer above the level of Section Officer will take action on a case in accordance with the departmental instructions (available in the system in electronic form) prescribing the level of final disposal and channel of submission for each category of cases.
- (2) Each Department will review the instructions on level of disposal and channel of submission *every three years keeping the number of levels at which a case is examined to the minimum by delegating powers to lower formations.*
- (3) As far as possible it will be ensured that a case is seen either by an Under Secretary or a Deputy Secretary/Director instead of both seeing it.
- (4) A Desk Officer will submit cases direct to a Deputy Secretary or Director who in turn would submit it to the Joint Secretary/Additional Secretary.

- (5) A case will pass through only one of the following levels before it is submitted to the Minister;
- Additional Secretary
 - Special Secretary
 - Secretary
- (6) A Joint Secretary can submit cases directly to Secretary/Minister and not necessarily through the Additional Secretary.
- (7) Additional Secretaries in large ministries should be allowed to function independently in day-to-day administrative and functional matters. In matters requiring orders of the Minister, other than those relating to policy/important cases, Additional Secretary can submit e-files directly to the Minister.
- (8) In Ministries/Departments with a Special Secretary and Secretary, there should be a clear delegation of authority to the Special Secretary so that in most matters he can function independently.
- (9) Wherever level jumping is done in respect of any category of cases, each such case on its return will pass through all the levels jumped over whom in suitable cases could resubmit the cases for reconsideration.
- 1) In case any officer, including the section officer requires inputs from any senior or junior officer in handling routine matter or while preparing a draft for an urgent e-file, the individual should send an email communication (recorded in the e-file) to the officer with a copy to the other officers in the workflow instead of assigning the e-file to the next higher officer. On receiving the inputs in the email, the email message should be attached as the e-file noting.
 - 2) In case of a high priority e-file that requires immediate attention by the final approving officer, the individual should assign the e-file directly to the approving officer with reasons specified in the noting section. The system will send an email communication to all the officers in the workflow on such level-jumping actions.
 - 3) In case the officer feels the necessity to act on a e-file that is pending with a junior officer, the officer should assign the e-file to self with reasons specified in the noting

section without any other interventions. The system will send an email communication to all the officers in the workflow on such level-jumping actions.

28. Direct submission of cases by senior assistants -

- (1) An assistant in a conventional section who has more than five years service in the grade including at least six months in the concerned section may be required to submit all his cases direct to the branch officer. In appropriate cases, assistants with less than five years service in the grade may also be permitted to submit cases direct to branch officer.
- (2) All the cases directly submitted by assistants to the branch officer will as a rule, go back to the assistants through the section officer. The section officer will be free to bring to the notice of the branch officer any omission or flaws in the submission of cases or the decisions taken and thus give an opportunity to the branch officer to reconsider the matter.

29. Examination by Officer -

- (1) An Officer will regularly discuss with his staff to decide the course of action to be taken on various cases. Normally a single note will be put up to the decision making level after the line of action is decided.
- (2) For dealing with important problem solving issues, the technique of putting up of a self-contained note may be used. This involves entrusting an officer or a group of officers with preparing a comprehensive note which will be put up straight to the decision making level. The note will contain the background to the problem, issues arising out of its precedents, if any, analysis of all relevant facts, and recommendations.

30. Deviation from normal procedures or rules - In every case where a major or minor infraction, other than trivial, of the existing procedures or rules, is sought to be made, it shall be the responsibility of the decision making authority to ensure that reasons are recorded in writing, justifying such a deviation from the rules or procedures.

31. Running summary of facts - To facilitate consideration and to obviate repeated recapitulation, a running summary of facts will be prepared and linked to the e-file labelled as such in every case in which it is evident that such a summary would contribute to its speedy disposal. This summary will also include the advice or views of other departments consulted in the matter but not opinions of individual officers within a department. It should be kept up to date, incorporating changes whenever further developments take place.

32. *Guidelines for noting.*

- (1) All notes will be concise and to the point. Lengthy notes are to be avoided.
- (2) The verbatim reproduction of extracts from or paraphrasing of the paper under consideration, fresh receipt, or any other part of correspondence or notes on the same e-file, should not be attempted.
- (3) When passing orders or making suggestions, an officer will confine his note to the actual points he proposes to make without reiterating the ground already covered in the previous notes. If he agrees to the line of action suggested in the preceding note, he will merely append his signature.
- (4) Any officer, who has to note upon a e-file on which a running summary of facts is available will, in drawing attention to the facts of the case, refer to the appropriate part of the summary without repeating it in his own note.
- (5) Relevant extracts of a rule or instruction will be placed on the e-file and attention to it will be drawn in the note, rather than reproducing the relevant provisions in the note.
- (6) Unless a running summary of facts is already available on the e-file or the last note on the e-file itself serves that purpose, a self-contained note will be put up with every case submitted to the Minister. Such a note will bring out briefly but clearly relevant facts, including the views expressed on the subject by other departments, if any, consulted in the matter and the point or points on which the orders of the Minister are sought.
- (7) If apparent errors or incorrect statements in a case have to be pointed out or if an opinion expressed therein has to be criticized, care should be taken to couch the observations in courteous and temperate language free from personal remarks.
- (8) When a paper under consideration raises several major points which require detailed examination and respective orders, each point (or group of related points) will be noted upon separately in sectional notes; such notes will each begin with a list of the major point(s) dealt with therein.
- (9) Notes and orders will normally be recorded in the notes portion of the e-file and will be serially generated by the system.

- (10) A note will be divided into serially numbered paragraphs of easy size, say ten lines each. Paragraphs may preferably have brief titles. The first paragraph will give an indication of the evidence and the conclusions reached. The final paragraph should weigh the arguments and make recommendations for action.
- (11) In writing notes the observations made in Appendix 7- 'Style in notes and drafts' will be kept in view.
- (12) While preparing/submitting Notes for the Cabinet/Cabinet Committees/Groups of Ministers, the required procedure as detailed in Appendix-7.1 will be kept in view.
- (13) While preparing/submitting of papers for consideration of the Committee of Secretaries, the required procedure as detailed in Appendix-7.2 will be kept in view.
- (14) While constitution/reconstitution of High-level Commissions/Committees, the required procedure as detailed in Appendix-7.3 will be kept in view.

33. *Modification of notes or orders.*

- (1) Senior officers shall not require any modification in, or replacement of, the notes recorded by their juniors once these have been submitted to them. Instead, the higher officers should record their own notes giving their views on the subject, where necessary correcting or modifying the facts given in earlier notes. In any case, the replacement or modification of the notes which have already been recorded on a e-file, when the e-file has been further noted upon by others, should not be permitted.
- (2) Where a note recorded in the first instance requires any modification on account of additional facts or any error having come to notice, a subsequent note may be recorded. However the earlier note(s) submitted shall be retained / recorded in the system for accountability trail purposes.
- (3) Where a final decision already communicated to a party is found later on to have been given on a mistaken ground or wrong facts or wrong interpretation of rules due to misunderstanding, such withdrawal may have also legal implications. In all such cases, in addition to consulting the Ministry of Law, wherever necessary, such a withdrawal should be permitted only after the approval of an officer higher than the one who took the original decision has been obtained and reasons for the reversal or modification of the earlier decision have been duly recorded on the e-file.

34. Noting on e-files received from other departments -

- (1) If the reference seeks the opinion, ruling or concurrence of the receiving department and requires detailed examination, such examination will normally be done separately through routine notes on a shadow e-file (which will be created by the receiving department) separate emails and only the final result will be recorded on the e-file by the officer responsible for commenting upon the reference. The officer to whom such a note is submitted will either accept that note or record a note of his own. In the former case, he may direct that the note in question or a specified portion thereof may be reproduced on the main e-file for communication to the department concerned. In the latter case, he will record a suitable note on the main e-file itself. In either case, a copy of the note recorded on the main e-file will be kept on the routine notes for retention in the receiving department before the e-file is returned to the originating department.
- (2) The department will open subject-wise e-files each year in which such routine notes will be kept. The inter-departmental note recorded on the e-file of the originating department will bear the subject e-file number to facilitate storage and retrieval for future reference.
- (3) Where the reference requires information of a factual nature or other action based on a clear precedent or practice, the dealing hand in the receiving department may note on the e-file straightway.
- (4) Where a note on an e-file is recorded by an officer after obtaining the orders of a higher officer, the fact that the views expressed therein have the approval of the latter should be specifically mentioned, in the note to be recorded on the e-file of the sending department.

35. Aids to processing -

- (1) To facilitate processing of a case, each section will maintain the following electronic records on the system for important subjects dealt with by it:
 - (a) standing guard e-files;
 - (b) standing notes;
 - (c) precedent book (vide para 90);
 - (d) standard process sheets (of repetitive items of work only); and
 - (e) reference folders containing copies of circulars, etc.

- (2) Apart from copies of acts, rules, orders and instructions concerning subjects dealt with by it, each section is expected to maintain, for ready reference, the Constitution of India and certain acts, rules and instructions of a general nature, references of most of which have been made in this manual. These should be accessible in an electronic format through the system. An illustrative list of such acts, rules and instructions is contained in Appendix 8.
- (3) The documentation-cum-reference system (electronic form) will include reference material peculiar to the need of the functional sections and a consciously developed information system to act as an aid to policy formulation, review and operational decisions.

36. Oral discussions -

- (1) All points emerging from discussions (including telephonic discussions) between two or more officers of the same department or from discussions between officers of different departments, and the conclusions reached will be recorded on the relevant e-file by the officer authorising action.
- (2) All discussions/instructions/decisions which the officer recording them considers to be important enough for the purpose, should be got confirmed by all those who have participated in or are responsible for them. This is particularly desirable in cases where the policy of the government is not clear or where some important deviation from the prescribed policy is involved or where two or more level differs on significant issues or the decision itself, though agreed up to by all concerned, is an important one.
- (3) The system shall have a provision for online collaboration. In case a discussion is required with concerned officers, before making a final decision, the approving authority may conduct an online/net meeting. The discussion as well as the final decision shall be automatically recorded as the minutes of the meeting.

37. Oral instructions by higher officers -

- (1) Where an officer is giving direction (including telephonic direction) for taking action in any case in respect of matters on which he or his subordinate has powers to decide, he shall ordinarily do so in writing. If, however, the circumstances of the case are such that there is no time for giving the instructions in writing, he should follow it up by a written confirmation at his earliest.

- (2) An officer shall, in the performance of his official duties, or in the exercise of the powers conferred on him, act in his best judgment except when he is acting under instructions of an official superior. In the latter case, he shall obtain the directions in writing wherever practicable before carrying out the instructions, and where it is not possible to do so, he shall obtain written confirmation of the directions as soon thereafter as possible. If the Officer giving the instructions is not his immediate official superior but one higher to the latter in the hierarchy, he shall bring such instructions to the notice of his immediate official superior at the earliest, and thereafter the latter will obtain the return confirmation of the directions from the senior officers who gave the instructions.

38. Oral orders on behalf of or from Minister.-

- (1) Whenever a member of the personal staff of a Minister communicates to any officer an oral order on behalf of the Minister, it shall be confirmed by him in writing immediately thereafter.
- (2) If any officer receives oral instructions from the Minister or from his personal staff and the orders are in accordance with the norms, rules, regulations or procedures they should be brought to the notice of the Secretary (or the head of the department where the officer concerned is working in or under a non-secretariat organisation).
- (3) If any Officer receives oral instructions from the Minister or from his personal staff and the orders are not in accordance with the norms, rules, regulations or procedures, he should seek further clear orders from the Secretary (or the head of the department in case he is working in or under a non-secretariat organisation) about the line of action to be taken, stating clearly that the oral instructions are not in accordance with the rules, regulations, norms or procedures.
- (4) In rare and urgent cases when the Minister is on tour/ is sick and his approval has to be taken on telephone the decision of the Minister can be conveyed by his Private Secretary. In such cases, confirmation will be obtained on e-file when the Minister returns to Headquarter/ rejoins.

39. Confirmation of oral instructions.-

- (1) If an officer seeks confirmation of oral instructions given by his superior, the latter should confirm it in writing whenever such confirmation is sought.

- (2) Receipt of communications from junior Officers seeking confirmation of oral instructions should be acknowledged by the senior officers or their personal staff, or the personal staff of the Minister, as the case may be.

40. Examination and progressing of cases in which two or more authorities are consulted. -

Where two or more State Governments, Central departments or other authorities are simultaneously consulted, the examination and, where necessary, tabulation of the replies will ordinarily be started as soon as replies begin to arrive and not held over till the receipt of all the replies or the expiry of the target date.

41. Referencing. -

- (1) Every page in each part of the e-file (viz., notes, correspondence, appendix to notes, and appendix to correspondence) will be consecutively numbered in separate series by the system.
- (2) Each item of correspondence in an e-file, whether receipt or issue, will be assigned a serial number in a common series, by the system.
- (3) The paper under consideration on a e-file will be flagged 'PUC' and the latest fresh receipt noted upon, as 'FR'. If there are more than one 'FR' they should be flagged separately as 'FR I', 'FR II', and so on.
- (4) To facilitate the identification of references to papers contained in other e-files after the removal of linked e-file(s), the number of the e-file referred to will be quoted invariably in the body of the note. Similarly, the number and date of orders, notifications and the resolutions, and, in the case of acts, rules and regulations, their brief title together with the number of the relevant section, rule, paragraph or clause, referred to will be quoted in the body of the notes.

42. Linking of e-files -

- (1) If the issues raised in two or more current e-files are so inter-connected that they must be dealt with together simultaneously, the relevant e-files will be linked electronically. Such linking may also be resorted to if a paper on one current e-file is required for reference in dealing with another current e-file
- (2) On receipt back after completion of action, the linked e-files will be immediately de-linked after taking relevant extracts and placing them on the linked e-files, where necessary.

43. *Use of urgency gradings.* -

- (1) The two urgency gradings authorised for use on cases are 'Immediate' and 'Priority'.
- (2) The label 'Immediate' will be used only in cases requiring prompt attention. Amongst the rest, the 'Priority' label will be used for cases which merit disposal in precedence to others of ordinary nature.
- (3) Where Lok Sabha / Rajya Sabha labels for questions, motions, bills are used, it will not be necessary to use, in addition, 'Immediate' or 'Priority' label.
- (4) The grading of urgency assigned to a case will be reviewed by all concerned at different stages of its progress and where necessary, revised. This is particularly important for cases proposed to be referred to other departments.

CHAPTER VII

HANDLING OF RECEIPTS UNDER DESK OFFICER SYSTEM

44. *General* - The general principles governing the action on receipts given in para 21 will apply to the desk officer system of functioning also. While the general-drill for receipt, distribution and handling of dak has been laid down in Chapters IV, V and VI, the special features that distinguish the desk-pattern from the section-based functioning are given below.

45. *Receipt of dak* - The central registry/IFC will send dak directly to the desk functionary

46. *Action by desk functionary* -

(1) The desk functionary will examine the receipt and will:

- in simple situations draft and issue a reply; and
- in other cases submit a draft to Deputy Secretary/ Director/ Joint Secretary for approval/signature without any elaborate note.

In case of any doubt he will take appropriate action after discussion with Deputy Secretary/ Director/ Joint Secretary.

(2) Occasionally a communication may give rise to a problem requiring to be solved. In such cases the technique of writing a self-contained note described in para 32 will be adopted.

(3) The supporting staff and the stenographer attached to a desk functionary will *inter alia* assist him in:

- dealing with simple cases including issue of acknowledgements, forwarding of papers etc.;
- compilation of data in given forms;
- maintaining codes, Manuals and other relevant research and reference material;
- records management; and
- typing work.

47. Maintenance of reference materials.

Each desk functionary will maintain an electronic documentation-cum-reference system in electronic form, comprising aids to processing described in para 35.

CHAPTER VIII

FORMS AND PROCEDURE OF COMMUNICATION

48. *Forms of communications* -

The different forms of communication generally used by a department are described below. Each form has a use and, in some cases, a phraseology of its own. Specimens of these forms are given in Appendix 9.

- (1) Letter - This form is used for corresponding with Foreign Governments, State Governments, the Union Public Service Commission and other constitutional bodies, heads of attached and subordinate offices, public enterprises, statutory authorities, public bodies and members of the public generally. A letter begins with the salutation Sir/Madam as may be appropriate.
- (2) Demi-official letter -
 - (a) This form is generally used in correspondence between Government officers for an inter-change or communication of opinion or information without the formality of the prescribed procedures. It may also be used when it is desired that the matter should receive personal attention of the individual addressed. Since demi-official letter is written in the first person in a personal and friendly tone, it should be addressed by an officer in a Ministry/Department who is ordinarily not more than one level below the officer to whom such communication is addressed.
 - (b) Communications to non-officials can also take the form of a demi-official letter.
- (3) Office Memorandum - This form is generally used for corresponding with other departments or in calling for information from or conveying information to its employees. It may also be used in corresponding with attached and subordinate offices. It is written in the third person and bears no salutation or supersession except the name and designation of the officer signing it.
- (4) Inter-departmental note -
 - (a) This form is generally employed for obtaining the advice, views, concurrence or comments of other departments on a proposal or in seeking clarification of the existing

rules, instructions etc. It may also be used by a department when consulting its attached and subordinate offices and *vice versa*.

- (b) The inter-departmental note may either be recorded on a e-file referred to another department or may take the form of an independent self-contained note. The subject need not be mentioned when recorded on the e-file.

(5) Telegram -

- (a) This form is used for communicating with out-station parties in matters demanding prompt attention. The text of the telegram should be as brief as possible.
 - (b) Telegrams are of two kinds viz. enclair telegrams and cypher code telegrams. The former are worded in plain language. The latter are expressed in secret language (code or cypher or both) but a combination in the same telegram of figures and letters having a secret meaning is not permitted. In editing, numbering and issuing of cypher/code telegrams, the instructions issued by the Ministry of External Affairs in respect of external telegrams and by the Ministry of Home Affairs in the case of internal telegrams, should be carefully observed.
 - (c) There are four gradings of urgency authorised for use in State telegrams, viz 'SVH', 'Most Immediate', 'Operation Immediate' and 'Immediate'. The use of these gradings is regulated by the rules issued by the Department of Posts. Relevant extracts from these rules are contained in Appendix 10.
 - (d) Telegrams, other than cypher and code telegrams, should normally be followed by post copies.
- (6) Fax facility – In urgent and important matters (including legal and financial messages), departments may use fax facilities to send messages, wherever available. Offices not connected through fax but having telex facilities, may send urgent and important messages through telex instead of a telegram in communicating with out-station offices.
- (7) Registered Post/ Registered AD – This method of delivery is used in communicating with offices to ensure receipt of the communication and in the case of Registered AD an acknowledgement of the delivery is also received by the issuing office.

- (8) Speed Post - This method of delivery is used to ensure quick receipt of messages warranting urgent attention at the receiving end and an acknowledgement of the delivery is also received by the issuing office.
- (9) Office order - This form is normally used for issuing instructions meant for internal administration, e.g., grant of regular leave, distribution of work among officers and sections, appointments and transfers, etc.
- (10) Order - This form is generally used for issuing certain types of financial sanctions and for communicating government orders in disciplinary cases, etc., to the officials concerned.
- (11) Notification - This form is mostly used in notifying the promulgation of statutory rules and orders, appointments and promotions of gazetted officers, etc. through publications in the Gazette of India. The composition of the gazette, the types of matters to be published in each part and section thereof, the instructions for sending the matter for publication therein and for sending copies thereof are indicated in Appendix 11.
- (12) Resolution - This form of communication is used for making public announcement of decisions of government in important matters of policy, e.g., the policy of industrial licensing, appointment of committees or commissions of enquiry. Resolutions are also published in the Gazette of India.
- (13) Press communiqué /note - This form is used when it is proposed to give wide publicity to a decision of government. A press communiqué is more formal in character than a press note and is expected to be reproduced intact by the press. A press note, on the other hand, is intended to serve as a hand-out to the press which may edit, compress or enlarge it, as deemed fit.
- (14) Endorsement - This form is used when a paper has to be returned in original to the sender, or the paper in original or its copy is sent to another department or office, for information or action. It is also used when a copy of a communication is proposed to be forwarded to parties other than the one to which it is addressed. Normally this form will not be used in communicating copies to state governments. The appropriate form for such communication should be a letter.

- (15) Circular - This form is used when important and urgent external communications received or important and urgent decisions taken internally have to be circulated within a department for information and compliance by a large number of employees.
- (16) Advertisement - This form is used for communicating with the general public to create awareness and may take the form of audio-visual or written communication.
- (17) E-mail - This is a paperless form of communication to be used by department having computer facilities supported by internet or intranet connectivity and can be widely used for subjects where legal or financial implications are not involved.

49. Telephonic communications -

- (1) Appropriate use of the medium of telephone may be made by departments for intra and inter-departmental consultation and for communication of information between parties situated locally.
- (2) In matters of urgency, departments may communicate with out-station offices also over the telephone.
- (3) Telephonic communications, wherever necessary, may be followed by written communications by way of confirmation.
- (4) Resort to ISD/ STD and trunk calls will be regulated by departmental instructions.

50. Correspondence with attached and subordinate offices -

- (1) (a) Senior Officers/ Head of a subordinate/ attached office under an administrative Ministry/ Department will correspond in respect of matters involving intervention/ approval of another Ministry/ Department in a note form to their concerned Ministry/ Department.
- (b) Head of an autonomous body under an administrative Ministry will write in respect of matters involving intervention/ approval of another Ministry/ Department to the Secretary of the concerned Ministry/ Department in a letter form.
- (c) In both the cases, concerned Ministry/ Department, if required, will take up the matter with another ministry.
- (d) Attached office/ subordinate office may, however, seek factual information from another Ministry/ Department directly.

(c) An officer of a subordinate office/ attached office/ autonomous body will not correspond directly with the Minister of another Ministry except the head of a statutory body/ regulatory authority set up by an Act of Parliament.

(2) In the case of their own attached offices and subordinate offices placed directly under them, i.e. without the intervention of an attached office, as are located in Delhi/New Delhi-referred to herein as 'Non-Secretariat Organisation' (NSO) for convenience-the departments will introduce the Single File System of correspondence, details of which are in para 51.

NOTE : The Single File System will not apply to correspondence between a department and any statutory, corporate or other autonomous body which might be owned or controlled by it.

51. *Single File System (SFS)* -

(1) This will apply to matters which have to be referred by the NSO to the department for seeking a sanction/order, i.e. a decision not within its own delegated powers.

(2) The SFS file need not bear a I.D. No. or other formal method of sending, but will be sent as though it is from one officer to another in the same organisation.

(3) The SFS file should be complete in all respects, so as to enable the department to take a decision expeditiously; hence the NSO will ensure that:

(a) every point for decision/order is clearly brought out;

(b) all relevant connected papers are attached to the file, properly referred to;

(c) draft orders/sanctions are put up, where they are required to be approved by the department for issue; and

(d) the availability of funds, etc., is certified where additional expenditure is involved in the proposal.

(4) The officer last dealing with the SFS case in the NSO will mark it to the appropriate officer in the department, by name; policy e-files will, however, be referred to the department at appropriate levels to be determined by the department and the NSO concerned, through a general order.

(5) All SFS files will be invariably routed through the central registry of the department concerned.

(6) As a rule, all notings in the department will be on the NSO e-file. However, where sensitive or delicate matters in the sphere of personnel, policy issues and finance are involved, the recording of notes in 'duplicate' e-files may be permitted by issuing general or special orders by the department. This will be done at a particular stage of the SFS case or at or above a particular level, with the final decision thereafter being suitably recorded on the SFS e-file.

(7) As a convention, the secretariat noting on a SFS e-file will start on a new page and the noting done sequentially-save in matters of the nature referred to in (6) above.

(8) Action to implement the government decision in SFS case, will be initiated in and by the NSO on the return of the e-file. Orders so issued should specifically state that these have received the concurrence of Government in the department concerned. Copies of every sanction/order so issued by the NSO, will be endorsed without fail to all the officers concerned in the department.

52. *Inter-departmental consultation -*

(1) Inter-departmental consultation may take the form of inter-departmental notes, inter-departmental meetings (this may include physical meeting where the members are present in person or the internet meetings wherein a facility of video conferencing or chatting is provided) or oral discussions.

(2) In making written inter-departmental references, the following points should be observed:

(a) Inter-departmental references, will normally be made under the directions of an officer not below the rank of Under Secretary or as may be provided by the departmental instructions.

(b) The points on which the opinion of other departments is sought or which it is desired to bring to their notice should be clearly stated.

(c) where possible, the drafts of the orders proposed to be issued may also be shown to the departments sought to be consulted.

(d) When it is necessary to consult more than one department on a case, such consultation may be effected simultaneously by self-contained inter-departmental electronic notes *unless:*

(i) it involves copying of a large number of documents available on the e-file; or

- (ii) the need for consulting the second department would arise only after the views of the first have become available.
 - (c) In case the sending Department is following the e-office system & the receiving Department is not following the e-office system, the former department will record a self contained note on its e-file, take its print out & send it to the latter Department. When it is received back, the comments of the latter department will be scanned & put into the system & thereafter the file will be handled in the former department, in e-mode. To summarise it should be the endeavour to revert to the e-system as quickly as possible.
- (3) (a) When such a reference requires concurrence of one or more Ministries under the Government of India (Transaction of Business) Rules, the following further points should be observed:
- (i) The originating Ministry should invariably prescribe a time-limit when calling for comments or concurrence from other Ministries.
 - (ii) In case any of the Ministries so consulted is not in a position to send its comments/concurrence within the prescribed time-limit; it should write back promptly, in any case before the prescribed time-limit, and indicate the additional time they would require for furnishing their final reply.
- (b) When such a reference does not require such concurrence under the Rules, the originating Ministry need not wait for the comments of other Ministry beyond the prescribed time-limit, and it should feel free to go ahead with its scheme/proposal without waiting any longer.
- (c) The initiating Ministry should always feel free to recall its e-file from another Ministry, to which such a reference has been made on a e-file, if such a course is required to be adopted for expediting the process of decision making in the case. Such a decision to recall an e-file should be taken at a level not lower than that of a branch officer in the originating Ministry.
- (4) Inter-departmental meetings may be held where it is necessary to elicit the opinion of other departments on important cases and arrive at a decision within a limited time. No such meeting

will normally be convened except under the orders of an officer not below the level of Joint Secretary. In respect of such meetings, it will be ensured that:

- (a) the representatives attending the meeting are officers who can take decisions on behalf of their departments;
 - (b) an agenda setting up clearly the points for discussion is prepared and sent along with the proposal for holding the meeting, allowing adequate time for the representatives of other departments to prepare themselves for the meeting; and
 - (c) a record of discussions is prepared immediately after the meeting and circulated to the other departments concerned, setting out the conclusions reached and indicating the department or departments responsible for taking further action on each conclusion.
 - (d) the system shall allow internet meetings wherein a facility of video conferencing or chatting is provided. The discussion as well as the final decision shall be recorded as minutes of meeting automatically by the system
- (5) On occasions it may be necessary to have oral discussions (including teleconferencing or video conferencing) with officers of other departments, e.g., when:
- (a) a preliminary discussion between the officers of the departments concerned is likely to help in the disposal of the case;
 - (b) it is desirable to reach a preliminary agreement before proceeding further in the matter;
 - (c) inter-departmental noting reveals a difference of opinion between two or more departments; or
 - (d) it is proposed to seek only information or advice of the department to be consulted.

The result of such oral consultation should be recorded in a single note on the e-file by the officer of the department to which the case belongs. The note will state clearly the conclusions reached and the reasons thereof. A copy of the note will also be sent to the departments consulted in order that they have a record of the conclusions reached.

(6) Reopening of decisions arrived at after proper inter-departmental consultations should normally be avoided. In case adequate grounds exist for re-opening of such issues, it should be settled after a quick re-assessment.

(7) In case two or more departments persist with their respective viewpoints leading to a deadlock or impasse, such issues should be sorted out by raising the level of consideration to a forum like the Committee of Secretaries headed by the Cabinet Secretary or to the level of Ministers concerned, to arrive at a quick decision without continuing with protracted correspondence/discussions among the disputing departments.

(8) Nodal Ministries/Departments which render advice to various departments and do so through different Divisions, will ensure that the views expressed by them at inter-departmental discussions are consistent, and they are not found deviating from their views on different occasions. The expression of conflicting views by the different Divisions of the same department during such inter-departmental discussions should be discouraged.

53. *Nodal Ministries/Departments* - In order that the number of interdepartmental references are minimised so as to facilitate reduced paper work and faster decision making, nodal Ministries/Departments such as Law, Finance, Personnel, Electronics, Environment, Planning Commission, Surface Transport, Petroleum, etc. may lay down clear guidelines on their respective subjects for individual departments to follow. Guidelines should be so framed that reference to nodal departments will be necessary in exceptional cases only.
54. *References to the Attorney-General of India* - References to the Attorney-General will be made only by the Ministry of Law and Justice.
55. *References to constitutional/statutory Authorities* - References to constitutional and statutory authorities such as Election Commission of India will normally be made in the letter form addressed to Principal Secretary/Secretary. In no case office memorandum will be sent to such authorities by the Ministries/ Departments.
56. *References to the Comptroller and Auditor General of India* - References to the Comptroller and Auditor General of India for his views or advice can be made only by or through the Ministry of Finance. In matters of day-to-day administration, Ministries/departments may, however, correspond direct with the Comptroller and Auditor General of India at their discretion.
57. *References to the Union Public Service Commission* - References to the Union Public Service Commission will normally be made in the form of letters addressed to the Secretary. In certain matters, e.g., requisitions for recruitment, formal references should ordinarily be preceded by personal discussion at appropriate levels.

58. *Correspondence with Union Territory Administrations* - All communications of a routine nature which clearly relate to the business of a particular department, will ordinarily be addressed to the Secretary in the appropriate department. Other important communications may be addressed to the Chief Secretary or the Administrator.

59. *Correspondence with State Governments* -

(1) Communications on the subjects which clearly relate to the business of a particular department will normally be addressed to the Secretary of that department. Other communications including those of special nature or importance warranting attention at higher levels, may be addressed to the Chief Secretary. Demi-official letters can also be sent to officers of State Governments. In case of demi-official communications to the Chief Secretary of a State, this level will not be below the level of Joint Secretary.

(2) Communications other than those of a purely routine nature, e.g., acknowledgements, will not ordinarily be addressed to State Governments except with the prior approval and over the signature of the branch officer. Purely routine communications can, however, be signed by a section officer.

60. *Correspondence with the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha Secretariats* - Communications meant for the Lok Sabha Secretariat or the Rajya Sabha Secretariat and requiring urgent or high level attention may be addressed to the Secretaries concerned and not to the Speaker or the Chairman direct.

61. *Correspondence with Members of Parliament* -

(1) Communications received from Members of Parliament should be attended to promptly.

(2) Where a communication is addressed to a Minister, it should, as far as practicable, be replied to by the Minister himself. In other cases, a reply should normally be issued over the signature of an officer of the rank of Secretary only.

(3) Where, however, a communication is addressed to the head of an attached or subordinate office, Public Sector Undertakings, Financial Institutions (including nationalised banks) Division/Branch Incharge in a Ministry/Department/Organisation, it should be replied to by the addressee himself. In routine matters, he may send an appropriate reply on his own. In policy matters, however, the officer should have prior consultation with higher authorities before sending

a reply. It should, however, be ensured that minimum level at which such replies are sent to Members of Parliament is that of Under Secretary and that also in letter form only.

(4) Normally information sought by a Member should be supplied unless it is of such a nature that it would have been denied to him even if asked for on the floor of the Houses of Parliament.

(5) As far as possible, in corresponding with Members of Parliament, pre-printed or cyclostyled replies should be avoided.

(6) In case a reference from an ex-Member of Parliament is addressed to a Minister or Secretary, reply to such reference may be sent by the concerned Divisional Head after obtaining approval of the Secretary of the Ministry/Department. In case the reference is addressed to a lower level officer, reply to such reference could be sent by the officer on his own in non-policy cases and after obtaining approval of the higher authorities in policy cases. However, the minimum level at which reply could be sent should be that of an Under Secretary and that too in letter form only.

62. Correspondence with Ministers of State Governments - The procedure laid down in the above paragraph may be followed in dealing with communications received from the Ministers of State Governments also.

63. Correspondence with Foreign Governments and International Organisations - Correspondence with Foreign Governments and their Missions in India, Heads of Indian Diplomatic Missions and posts abroad and United Nations and its specialised agencies will normally be channelised through the Ministry of External Affairs. The exceptions under which direct correspondence may be resorted to are indicated in the instructions entitled 'Channel of communication between the Government of India and State Governments on the one hand; and Foreign and Commonwealth Governments or their Missions in India, Heads of Indian Diplomatic Missions and posts abroad and United Nations and its specialised agencies on the other' issued by the Ministry of External Affairs.

64. Prompt response to letters received -

(1) Each communication received from the Member of Parliament, a member of the public, a recognised association or a public body will be acknowledged within 15 days, followed by a reply within the next 15 days of acknowledgement sent.

(2) Where (i) delay is anticipated in sending a final reply, or (ii) information has to be obtained from another Ministry or another office, an interim reply will be sent within a month (from the date of receipt) indicating the possible date by which a final reply can be given.

(3) If any such communication is wrongly addressed to a department, it will be transferred promptly (within a week) to the appropriate department under intimation to the party concerned.

(4) Where the request of a member of the public cannot be acceded to for any reason, reasons for not acceding to such a request should be given.

(5) As far as possible, requests from members of public, should be looked at from the user's point of view and not solely from the point of view of what may be administratively convenient.

65. *Target date for replies* - In all important matters in which State Governments, departments of the Central Government, or other offices, public bodies or individuals are consulted, time limit for replies may ordinarily be specified. On the expiry of the specified date, orders of the appropriate authority may be obtained on whether the offices whose replies have not been received, may be allowed an extension of time or whether the matter may be processed, without waiting for their replies.

CHAPTER IX

DRAFTING OF COMMUNICATIONS

66. Procedure for drafting -

(1) No draft is required to be prepared in simple and straight-forward cases or those of a repetitive nature for which standard forms of communication exist. Such cases may be submitted to the appropriate officer for their digital signatures

(2) It is not always necessary to await the approval of the proposed line of action and the draft will be put up simultaneously along with the notes by the initiating level officer. The higher officer may revise the draft if it does not conform to the approved course of action. He shall carry out the revisions / modifications in a different font so as to distinguish the corrections made.

67. General instructions for drafting -

(1) A draft should carry the message sought to be conveyed in a language that is clear, concise and incapable of misconstruction.

(2) Lengthy sentences, abruptness, redundancy, circumlocution, superlatives and repetition, whether of words, observations or ideas, should be avoided.

(3) Official communications emanating from a department and purporting to convey the views or orders of the Government of India must specifically be expressed to have been written under the directions of Government. This requirement does not, however, imply that each communication should start with the phrase 'I am directed to say' or 'The undersigned is directed to convey', which has the effect of distancing the communicator from the reader at the very outset. A more direct and to-the-point format is to be preferred if some degree of rapport is to be established with the receiver of the communication. The obligatory requirement can be met in a variety of imaginative ways. For instance, variations of the phrase can be added to the operative part of the letter towards the end as under:

.....I have the pleasure to inform you that the government, on reconsideration of the matter, has decided to sanction an additional grant of.....

or

.....In the light of the above developments, government conveys its inability to accede to.....

(4) Communications of some length or complexity should generally conclude with a summary.

(5) Depending upon the form of communication the subject should be mentioned in it (including reminders).

(6) The number and date of the last communication in the series, and if this is not from the addressee, his last communication on the subject, should always be referred to. Where it is necessary to refer to more than one communication or a series of communications, this should be done in the margin of the draft.

(7) All drafts put up on an e-file should bear the number of that file. When two or more communications are to issue from the same e-file on the same date, a separate serial number may be inserted before the numeral identifying the year to avoid confusion in reference, e.g., A-11011/5(I)/2001-Est., A-11011/5(II)/2001-Est.

(8) A draft should clearly specify the enclosures which are to accompany the fair copy. In addition, short oblique lines or stars should be typed at appropriate places in the margin for ready reference by the all concerned. The number of enclosures should also be indicated at the end of the draft on the bottom left of the page thus ... 'Encl 3'.

(9) If copies of an enclosure referred to in the draft are available and are, therefore, not to be photocopied, an indication to that effect will be given in the margin of the draft below the relevant oblique line, so as to ensure economy in the use of paper. In case the fair letter has to issue electronically, and the enclosures are already available in the electronic form, an indication to that effect will be given in the margin of the draft, by the dealing hand at the time of putting up of the draft.

(10) If the communication to be despatched by post is important (e.g., a notice cancelling a licence or withdrawing an existing facility) or encloses a valuable document (such as an agreement, service book or a cheque) instructions as to whether it should be sent through registered post or speed post or in an insured cover, will be highlighted on the e-file by the section officer concerned with its issue.

(11) Urgent communications with bulky enclosures to far-flung areas like Andaman & Nicobar Islands will be arranged to be despatched by Air Parcel through Indian Airlines. The addressee will also be advised through wireless to take delivery of the consignment. Instructions to this

effect will be given by the Divisional Head/Branch Officer/Section Officer at the time of approval of draft.

(12) The name, designation, telephone number, fax number, and e-mail address of the officer, over whose signature the communication is to issue, should invariably be indicated on the draft.

(13) In the physical system, while preparing a draft, sufficient space is left in the margin and also between successive lines to admit additions or interpolations of words if necessary. However, in the electronic system it would not be necessary to do so, because this facility will be automatically available in the system.

(14) On the top right hand corner the words 'DFA' will be typed in bold, on every draft which is put up for approval. If two or more drafts are put up on an e-file, the words 'DFA I, DFA II, DFA III' and so on will be typed in bold, on the top right hand corner of the drafts.

(15) Drafts which are to issue as 'Immediate' or 'Priority' will be so marked under the orders of an officer not lower in rank than a Section Officer.

(16) Instructions contained in **Appendix 7** will be observed while drafting.

68. Authentication of Government Orders -

(1) All orders and other instruments made and executed in the name of the President should be expressed to be made in his name and signed digitally by an officer having regular or ex-officio secretariat status of and above the rank of Under Secretary, or other officers specifically authorised to authenticate such orders under the Authentication (Orders and Other Instruments) Rules, 1958.

(2) Where the power to make orders, notifications, etc., is conferred by a statute on the Government of India, such orders and notifications will be expressed to be made in the name of the Government of India.

69. Addressing communications to officers by name - Normally no communication, other than that of a classified nature or a demi-official letter, should be addressed or marked to an officer by name, unless it is intended that the matter raised therein should receive his personal attention either because of its

special nature, urgency or importance, or because some ground has already been covered by personal discussions with him and he would be in a better position to deal with it.

70. Drafting of demi-official letters -

(1) As the objective of writing a demi-official (d.o.) letter is to invite the personal attention of the addressee, the style of writing should be direct, personal and friendly. More usage of active voice is to be preferred. (E.g., 'I notice' rather than 'It is noticed'). It is expedient to come to the issue at the beginning itself e.g. 'I seek your cooperation in the matter of.....'

(2) d.o. letters should preferably not exceed one page. If the message to be conveyed is lengthy, it is better to condense it into one page in a few small and healthy divided paragraphs in a manner that holds the interest of the addressee and the detailed arguments can be set out in appendices.

(3) The colour code in d.o letters will be as follows. A d.o. letter from a Minister will exhibit the National Emblem in blue colour and that from an officer will exhibit the National Emblem in red colour. The instructions issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs from time to time, in this regard may be adhered to. In case the d.o. letter is prepared electronically, the prescribed colour code of the National Emblem and other usual entries which generally appear on the pre printed letter heads, (such as the designation, telephone numbers, e-mail address, postal address, name of the office, etc.) will be taken care of by the system itself.

CHAPTER X
ISSUE OF DRAFTS

71. Fair typing of drafts & issue of fair communications:

- (1) After a draft is approved it has to be fair typed. The basic principle would be that the fair typing of the communication, on the pre-printed stationery or otherwise will be taken care of by the personal staff of the officer who has to sign the fair communication.
- (2) After the draft has been approved by the competent authority, the e-file will be returned to the officer who has to sign the fair communication.
- (3) On the receipt of such an e-file the officer will again go through the draft to confirm that all corrections of spelling/grammar have been properly carried out; and there are no errors.
- (4) Thereafter the officer concerned will pass on the e-file to his PA/PS for fair typing of the draft communication on the pre-printed letter head. The PA/PS shall fair type the letter & get it signed digitally from the officer concerned & then pass on the e-file electronically to the section officer concerned for issuing the fair communication electronically.
- (5) In case the fair letter has to be issued under the signatures of section officer, the fair typing will be taken care of by either the dealing hand or any other functionary at the discretion of section officer.
- (6) The section officer will attach the enclosures (if any) electronically to the fair communication and then get it issued electronically. He will however send it to C. R. Unit if it is to be issued in physical form.
- (7) Alternately the fair e-communications can be issued by C. R. Unit or the personal staff of the officer concerned also. This will be governed by departmental instructions.
- (8) In case the communication has to be issued in physical form the instructions contained in CSMOP would prevail.

72. Simultaneous SMS alert after issuing the fair communication:

After issuing the fair communication electronically, the sender will also cause (through the e-office system) a simultaneous SMS to be sent to the addressee(s) to keep the latter informed of the fact that a communication on the subject under question has been sent to him(them) and the latter may kindly look into it at the earliest so as to expedite a reply etc.

73. Docketing of the fair communication(s) in the notes portion of the e-file:-

(1) After the fair communication has been issued electronically its office copy shall be added to the correspondence portion of the e-file, by the dealing hand. The system will automatically generate a new Serial number for every such communication issued electronically. The systems also affix the serial number so generated on the top right hand corner of the first page of the office copy of the communication so issued. The dealing hand shall also docket it in red colour in the notes portion of the e-file. The docketing shall essentially have following 4 parameters:

- (i) Serial number (It will be auto generated by the system)
- (ii) Date of issue
- (iii) Details of addressee(s)
- (iv) Page numbers of the communication(s) issued

Example:

Serial Number 13(Issue) dt 30.06.2008 to all State Govts/MHA/Min of Finance (page No. 38-40/cor)

(2) This docketing will be done immediately below that note which has culminated in issue of the fair communication(s) in question.

74. Action after issue

(1) The dealing hand will:

(a) examine whether the case is fit for inclusion in any of the following reports and obtain orders of the appropriate officer:

(i) weekly statement of cases (*automatically generated in computer environment*), other than those of a routine nature, disposed of without reference to the Minister-in-charge (Appendix 20), to be submitted to the Minister in accordance with departmental instructions; and

(ii) monthly summary of the principal activities of the department to be furnished to the Cabinet Secretariat in accordance with the instructions issued by it.

(b) initiate action to record the e-file where it has been marked for record by the section officer [vide part 70(4)].

(c) if a reply to the communication issued is to be awaited or further action on the e-file is to be resumed at a later date; mark the e-file for being brought forward on that date, for considering issuing a reminder on that date if a reply has not been received by that date.

(2) In the desk system, all activities outlined in sub-para (1) above will be performed by the desk functionary with the assistance of the stenographer/assistant attached to him.

75. Reference lists

(1) To facilitate quick despatch of fair communications in the electronic form, the following lists and directories will be maintained in the Knowledge Management Module of the Ministries / Departments concerned;

(a) residential addresses, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses of officers and staff of the Ministry/Department concerned;

(b) official addresses, telephone numbers, mobile numbers, fax numbers and e-mail addresses of officers of other Ministries/Departments

(c) official/residential addresses, telephone numbers, mobile numbers, fax numbers and e-mail addresses of officers and Parliament Assitants of other Ministries/Departments designated to receive Parliamentary papers;

(d) official/residential addresses, telephone numbers, mobile numbers, fax numbers and e-mail addresses of all the officers of attached/subordinate offices, autonomous bodies, Commissions/Councils/Boards and Public Sector Undertakings etc; which are under the administrative control of the Ministry/Department concerned,

(e) official/residential addresses, telephone numbers, mobile numbers, fax numbers and e-mail addresses of the Chief Secretaries, Secretaries of the sector concerned and the Resident Commissioners of all the State Governments/Union Territories;

(f) official/residential addresses, telephone numbers, mobile numbers, fax numbers and e-mail addresses of Members of Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha (including Council of Ministers);

(g) Delhi Official Directory issued by the President's Secretariat;

(h) Official Directory issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs;

(i) List of India's Representatives Abroad (issued by the Ministry of External Affairs) containing their official/residential addresses, telephone numbers, mobile numbers, fax numbers and e-mail addresses

(j) Diplomatic List (issued by the Ministry of External Affairs) containing the addresses / telephones numbers etc. of the Foreign Missions in India

(k) Postal PIN code directory

(2) These lists will be updated periodically by the C. R. incharge.

CHAPTER XI

E-FILE NUMBERING SYSTEM

76. *e-file numbering system* - A proper e-file numbering system is essential for convenient identification, sorting, storage and retrieval of papers. The two systems now in use in the secretariat are described below. For the purpose of numbering of files, documents, circulars etc., the e-Office system will need to deploy a Standard Taxonomy.

77. *Functional e-file numbering system* -

(1) In this system the range and dimensions of the subjects falling under the scope of business allocated to a department are analysed in the following sequence:

- (a) the main functions of the department;
- (b) the activities in each of these functions;
- (c) the aspects or operations involved in each of these activities; and
- (d) the factors to be taken into consideration relating to each of these aspects or operations.

(2) The scope of business of a department is thus analysed under four hierarchical divisions, and accordingly the following four standard lists of headings are prepared:

- (a) functional heads which may be called 'basic heads';
- (b) activity heads which may be called 'primary heads' as related to each functional head;
- (c) aspect or operation heads which may be called 'secondary heads' as related to activity heads; and
- (d) factor heads which may be called 'tertiary heads' as related to aspects or operation heads.

(3) Based upon the above lists of heads, a functional e-file index for the various substantive subjects dealt with by a department together with an identifying e-file numbering system is then developed in accordance with **Appendix 21**, which explains the essentials of such a system.

(4) For opening e-files relating to establishment, finance, budget and accounts, office supplies and services, and other house-keeping jobs common to all departments, the standardised functional e-file index including its e-file-numbering system, issued by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances will be followed.

78. E-file numbering system based on subject classification -

(1) Each section will maintain approved lists of:

- (a) standard heads, i.e. main subject headings concerning it; and
- (b) standard sub-heads, i.e. aspects of the main subject headings.

(2) The standard heads will bear consecutive serial numbers. No such numbers, however, will be allotted to standard sub-heads.

(3) The lists of standard heads and sub-heads will be reviewed at the beginning of each year and revised, if necessary, with the approval of the branch officer concerned. The serial numbers once allotted to the standard heads should not ordinarily be changed.

(4) Before opening a new e-file, the dealing hand will ascertain the standard head to which the paper under consideration relates. He will then propose a suitable title of the e-file for the approval of the section officer. The title will consist of:

- (a) standard head;
- (b) sub-head which will be more indicative of the precise subject than the 'head', (where it is necessary to have more than one sub-head in a title the general should usually precede the specific); and
- (c) a brief content indicating the question or issue under consideration in relation to the standard head and sub-head and where necessary, the specific institution, person, place or thing involved.

(5) The title should be as brief as possible but should give at a glance sufficient indication of the contents of the e-file so as to serve as an aid to its identification. It should be articulated, i.e. broken up into components, each consisting of the minimum possible substantive words and expressing an element in the subject matter. Each part will begin with a capital letter and will be separated from the preceding one by a bold dash.

(6) As far as possible, there should be a separate e-file for each distinct aspect of the subject. The title of a e-file should not be couched in very general or wide terms which might attract large number of receipts on different aspects of the matter, thereby making the e-file unwieldy.

(7) If the issue raised in a fresh receipt or in the note on a current e-file goes beyond the original scope, a new e-file may be opened to deal with it, after placing the relevant extracts or copies thereon.

(8) Every e-file will be assigned a e-file number which will consist of:

- (a) the serial number allotted to the standard head;
- (b) the serial number of the e-file opened during the year under the standard head;
- (c) the year of opening the e-file (all four digits i.e., 2000, 2001, etc.); and
- (d) an abbreviated symbol identifying the section.

(9) The first three elements in the e-file number will be separated from one another by a slant stroke and the last two by a dash. Thus, e-files opened in, say, Scientific Research Section during 2000 under the standard head bearing serial number '3', will be numbered consecutively as 3/1/2000-SR, 3/2/2000-SR and so on, where 'SR' represents the section.

(10) In a computer environment, a unique e-file number will be generated automatically in either of the systems mentioned in paragraph 77 & 78, as and when a new e-file is opened.

(11) The e-files which are entered in the system will be automatically traceable on any of the following parameters :

- (a) no. of the file
- (b) date of opening the file
- (c) as many catch words as possible from out of the subject of the file
- (d) any other parameter(s) at the discretion of the department concerned

79. Instances where e-files need not be opened - Normally, no new e-files will be opened for dealing with receipts of a purely routine nature (e.g. requests for supply of unclassified factual information, notices of holidays, miscellaneous circulars) which:

- (1) can be disposed of straightaway by noting the reply on the source receipts and returning them to the originators; or

(2) are unlikely to generate further correspondence and therefore can be placed in a miscellaneous e-file to be destroyed at the end of the year, or placed in the folder of circulars, etc.; if it exists on the given subject.

80. *E-file register* - A record of e-files opened during a calendar year will be automatically maintained by the system in the form of electronic e-file register **(Appendix 22)**.

81. *Transfer, reconstruction and renumbering of e-files* - Whenever work is transferred from one department/section to another, the former will promptly transfer all the related records including e-files, both current and closed, to the latter. The department/section taking over the records will not divide, reclassify or renumber the closed e-files transferred to it. In the case of current e-files, the endeavour should be to close them at the earliest possible stage and to open new e-files according to the department's/section's own scheme of classification for dealing with the matter further.

82. A e-file will be reconstructed if it is deleted from the electronic records (and cannot be recovered). The e-file number and the subject will be obtained from the e-file register and the copies of correspondence will be sought from the corresponding department. On receipt of all such papers they will be arranged in chronological order on the e-file and a self-contained note will be prepared on the basis of the copies of correspondence, and placed on the notes portion of the reconstructed e-file.

83. *Movement of e-files*

(1) As and when a file is electronically sent from one functionary to another functionary its movement will be automatically captured by the system.

(2) The following parameters of movement of the file will be captured by the system:

(a) Date and Time of opening/creation of file

(b) Date and Time of sending the file from one functionary to another

(c) Details of the sender & receiver

(d) Details of the linked files (if any)

(e) Other parameter(s) (if any) as may be desired by the user Ministry/Department.

CHAPTER XII

RECORDS MANAGEMENT

84. Activities involved in records management –

- (1) Records management covers the activities concerning recording, retention, retrieval and weeding out.
- (2) Each record creating agency will nominate a Departmental Records Officer (DRO) who is not below the level of a Section Officer for overall records management.

85. Stage of recording : E-files should be recorded after action on the issues considered thereon has been completed. However, e-files of a purely ephemeral nature (such as casual leave records or circulars of temporary nature) containing papers of little reference or research value may be destroyed after one year without being formally recorded.

86. Each department may issue departmental instructions to regulate the review and weeding out of records in line with paras 92 and 95.

87. Voluntary disclosure of the of the gist of the decisions contained in the e-file in consonance with the provisions of the RTI Act, 2005: Before the action to record an e-file is initiated by the dealing hand, he shall necessarily upload the gist of the important decisions contained in that file, on the website of the Ministry/Department/Office in order to comply with the provisions of the RTI Act, 2005, if this has not been already done.

88. Procedure for recording : After action on the issue(s) considered on the e-file has been completed, the dealing hand/initiating officer, in consultation with his supervisory officer, should close and record the e-file in the manner prescribed below:

- (a) indicate the appropriate category of record (vide para 89 below) and also specify the retention period and the year of destruction on the e-file;
- (b) where necessary, revise the title of the e-file so that it describes adequately the contents at that stage;
- (c) extract from the e-file, copies of important decisions, documents etc. as are considered useful for future reference and add them to the standing guard e-file/precedent book;
- (d) remove from the file superfluous papers, if any

- (e) enter the following parameters in the system :
 - (i) file No.
 - (ii) year of opening the file
 - (iii) year of closing the file
 - (iv) subject matter of the file in as many catch words as possible
 - (v) any other parameter if so decided by the department concerned
- (f) transfer the electronic file so recorded to Electronic Record Room

89. Categorization of records:

(1) Unlike the physical system where we have 3 categories i.e. A, B & C as detailed in para 105 of CSMOP, in the electronic system, there will only be 2 categories of e-files i.e. Category I & II.

(2) Category I: This category will be adopted for such e-files which qualify for permanent preservation for administrative purposes or which are of historical importance such as:

- (1) Papers containing evidence of rights or obligations of or against the government, e.g., title to property, claims for compensation not subject to a time limit, formal instruments such as awards, schemes, orders, sanctions, etc.
- (2) Papers relating to major policy decisions, including those relating to the preparation of legislation.
- (3) Papers regarding constitution, functions and working of important committees, working groups etc.
- (4) Papers providing lasting precedents for important procedures, e.g. administrative memoranda, historical reports and summaries, legal opinions on important matters.
- (5) Papers concerning rules, regulations, departmental guides or instructions of general application.
- (6) Papers relating to salient features of organization and staffing of government departments and offices.
- (7) Papers relating to important litigation or 'causes celebres' in which the administration was involved.
- (8) Papers relating to the origin of a department or agency of government; how it was organized; how it functioned; and (if defunct) how and why it was dissolved.

- (9) Data about what the department/agency accomplished. (Samples by way of illustration may be enough; but the need for such samples may be dispensed with where published annual reports are available).
- (10) Papers relating to a change of policy. This is not always easy to recognize, but watch should be kept for (a) summary for a Minister, (b) the appointment of a departmental or inter-departmental committee or working group, and (c) note for the Cabinet or a Cabinet Committee. Generally there should be a conscious effort to preserve all such papers, including those reflecting conflicting points of view. In the case of inter-departmental committees, however, it is important that a complete set of papers be kept only by the departments mainly concerned – usually the one providing secretariat.
- (11) Papers relating to the implementation of a change of policy, including a complete set of instructions to execute agencies etc., and relevant forms.
- (12) Papers relating to a well-known public or international event or cause celebre, or to other events which gave rise to interest or controversy on the national plane.
- (13) Papers containing direct reference to trends or developments in political, social, economic or other fields, particularly if they contain unpublished statistical or financial data covering a long period or a wide area.
- (14) Papers cited in or noted as consulted in connection with, official publications.
- (15) Papers relating to the more important aspects of scientific or technical research and development.
- (16) Papers containing matters of local interest of which it is unreasonable to expect that evidence will be available locally, or comprising synopsis of such information covering the whole country or a wide area.
- (17) Papers relating to obsolete activities or investigations, or to abortive scheme in important fields.
- (18) Any other specific category of records which, according to the departmental instructions issued in consultation with the National Archives, have to be treated as genuine source of information on any aspect of history-political, social, economic, etc., or are considered to be of biographical or antiquarian interest.

(3) Category II; meaning 'keep for specified period only' – This category will include e-files of secondary importance and having reference value for a limited period not exceeding 25 years. In exceptional cases, if the record is required to be retained beyond 25 years it will be upgraded to Category I.

90. Precedent Book - Every section will maintain a precedent book in the prescribed form (Appendix **27**) for keeping note of important rulings and decisions having a precedent value for ready reference. Entries in this record will be made at the earliest opportunity and, in any case, at the stage of recording the e-file. In the electronic system the software shall incorporate the provision for a precedent book option. The e-files having precedence value and important policy issues, after getting closed will be entered in the precedent book i.e. A complete copy of the notes & correspondence portion of the e-file will be added to the precedent book. This would help in retrieving old precedents so as to review the policy matters.

91. Review, Weeding Out and Deletion of the recorded e-files, from the system:

(1) Beginning in January each year, the D.R.O. will send a message electronically to all the Sections/Desks informing them of the details of the files which have become due for review. He shall send the details of such files in a pre-designed format. (Appendix **31**),

(2) A Category 'II' e-file so received from the D.R.O. will be reviewed by the Section Officer on the expiry of the specified retention period and marked for deletion unless there are sufficient grounds warranting its further retention. Justification for retaining an e-file after review will be recorded on the e-file with the approval of branch officer/divisional head concerned. Retention after review will be for a period not exceeding 25 years, including the period already retained.

(3) It may, however, be ensured that in case an inquiry has been initiated departmentally or by a Commission of Inquiry or as a result of Court proceedings having a bearing on the subject matter contained in the e-files/documents concerned or the e-files/documents which are required in connection with the implementation of order/judgement of any court of law, such e-files/documents will not be destroyed, even if, such e-files/documents have completed their prescribed life as per the Record Retention Schedule.

(4) e-files/documents referred to above may be, destroyed only after submission of the Report by the Commission or completion of inquiry or implementation of the judgement/order of the

court(s), with the approval of the concerned Joint Secretary/Head of the Department. In case the implementation of the court order has been challenged/appealed against either by the Government or by the applicant in a higher court, the concerned e-e-files/documents will not be weeded until such time the appeal/challenge is considered and finally decided. In such cases the limitation period prescribed for appeals should also be kept in mind.

(5) After review the dealing hand will make entries electronically of revised categorization/retention periods in a pre-designed format (**Appendix ____**) and send the same to the departmental record room.

(6) In case a recorded e-file is marked for deletion, it will move to recycle bin, for final deletion by the records clerk.

(7) Category 'I' e-files will be reviewed on attaining the 25th year of their life in consultation with the National Archives of India. In these reviews, the need for downgrading the original categorization of Category 'I' may also be considered. The Category I, e-files which survive after such a review, will be transferred to National Archives of India.

92. Record Retention Schedule -

(1) To ensure that e-files are neither prematurely destroyed, nor kept for periods longer than necessary, every department will:

(a) in respect of records connected with accounts, observe the instructions contained in Appendix 13 to the General Financial Rules;

(b) in respect of records, relating to establishment, personnel and housekeeping matters common to all departments, follow the 'schedule of periods of retention for records common to all departments' issued by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances;

(c) in respect of records prescribed in this Manual, observe the retention periods specified in Appendix **28**; and

(d) in respect of records connected with its substantive functions, issue a departmental retention schedule prescribing the periods for which e-files dealing with specified subjects should be preserved in consultation with the National Archives of India.

(2) The above schedules should be reviewed at least once in 5 years.

93. Archival of Digital records:

(1) The archival of digital records i.e. disposed / closed e-Files and correspondences have to be taken at regular intervals not later than end of every week. Two copies of the archived digital records has to be maintained one at the location of Disaster Recovery Site if any and the other with the Data Center / "Digital Record room" to be set up as part of e-Office. This will be responsibility of the service provider/ NIC / any other agency designated by the Government.

(2) All the current activities being carried out in any e-file or otherwise, will get saved automatically, in the system, (as and when these are undertaken), in the 'Data Centre' and 'Disaster Recovery Centre' in active/active configuration with maximum permissible data loss of five minutes.

(3) However, the ultimate responsibility to ensure that activities mentioned in sub-paragraphs (1) and (2) above are being done satisfactorily, will rest with the department concerned.

(4) The records will be captured in the digital system with appropriate disaster recovery procedures. The access rights on the records along with the security permissions will be maintained in the digital system.

(5) Information audit has to be conducted annually on the adherence and conformance of processes mentioned in the e-Manual by the Digital Record room as part of the annual inspections duly co-opting the resource from National Archives.

94. **Review of Non electronic Records:** Records not falling within the definition of e-file, e.g., publications, spare copies of circulars, orders, etc., will also be subjected to periodic reviews at suitable intervals and those no longer needed should be weeded out.

95. **Records maintained by officers and their personal staff** - Each department may issue departmental instructions to regulate the review and weeding out of records maintained by officers and their personal staff.

96. *Requisitioning of records* -

(1) No recorded e-file will be issued from the sectional, departmental or Archival records except against a signed requisition in form prescribed under Public Records Act, 1993 in the case of Archival records and in the form at Appendix 34 in the case of other records.

(2) Requisitions for e-files belonging to other departments and in the custody of the National Archives will be got endorsed by the department concerned before they are sent to the Archives. If the requisitioned e-file happens to be a confidential one, the Archives will not supply the e-file direct to the requisitioning department but route it through the department to which it belongs.

(3) The requisition will be kept in the place of the e-file issued.

(4) If the requisitioned e-file is one that has been microfilmed or printed, normally a microfilmed or printed copy and not the original will be issued to the requisitioning department.

(5) If a requisitioned e-file initially obtained for being put up in one case is subsequently put up on another, a fresh requisition should be given to the section daftry or sent to the departmental record room or the National Archives, as the case may be, for replacing the original requisition which will be returned to the office concerned. In the case of records obtained from the National Archives, the fresh requisition slip will be prominently marked 'change slip'.

(6) On return, the requisitioned e-file will be restored to its place and the requisition returned to the section/official concerned.

(7) E-files obtained by a section from the departmental record room will normally be returned within 3 months. If they are not received back within this period, the departmental record room will remind the section concerned. For this purpose, the record room will maintain a simple register for keeping a record of the e-files issued to the various sections each month. A similar register will be maintained by each section as a record of e-files borrowed from it by other sections.

(8) E-files obtained by a department from the National Archives will not normally be retained for more than 6 months except with the latter's specific knowledge and consent.

CHAPTER XIII

SECURITY OF OFFICIAL INFORMATION AND DOCUMENTS

97. *Unauthorised communication of official information –*

(1) Unless authorised by general or specific orders, no official will communicate to another official or a non-official, any information or document(s) (*including electronic document(s)*) which has come into his possession in the course of his official duties.

(2) Access to the official information/document/records etc. would be restricted based on the hierarchy of the organization, and would be governed by departmental instructions.

98. *Treatment of classified papers -*

(1) In handling classified records, the official concerned will have to exercise, special care and follow the provisions under 'Departmental Security Instructions' issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs. Since, according to these instructions, classified papers (other than confidential) are expected to be handled either by officers themselves or in sections designated as 'secret' or 'top secret', it is essential that in sections not so designated:

(a) a separate set of registers and other records (e.g., dak register, section diary, e-file register, e-file movement register, precedent book, index slips, various arrears and disposal statements, electronic media, floppies, CDs, etc.), is maintained by section officer himself; and

(b) the recording of such e-files and their review is also undertaken by him personally, keeping in view the provision under the Departmental Security Instructions.

(2) Every classified e-file will be reviewed once in five years for declassification. A declassified e-file considered fit for permanent preservation will be transferred to the National Archives.

99. *Confidential character of notes/ e-files -*

(1) The notes portion of an e-file referred by a department to another will be treated as confidential and will not be referred to any authority outside the secretariat and attached offices without the general or specific consent of the department to which the e-file belongs. *If the information is in the electronic form it will be handled by the authorised official only.*

(2) Where the general consent has been obtained under sub-para (1) above, such consent will, however, exclude classified e-files or the e-files in which the officer to whom the e-file is

supposed to be referred or shown, is personally affected, or in which his official conduct is under consideration.

(3) For the purpose of attending meetings/discussions outside office an officer not below the level of Section Officer/Desk Officer may carry Confidential papers/e-files or an officer not below the level of Under Secretary may carry Secret papers/e-files in a special circumstance with the written authorisation of Joint Secretary concerned. The authorisation will be produced by the officer on demand.

User Access: The Access to recorded e-files/current e-files/semi-current e-files/receipts/any other record; of classified or unclassified nature will be regulated by the Departmental instructions.

100. *Communication of information to the press -*

(1) Official information to the press and other news media, i.e. radio and television, will normally be communicated through the Press Information Bureau.

(2) Only Ministers, Secretaries and other officers specially authorised in this behalf may give information or be accessible to the representatives of the press. Any other official, if approached by a representative of the press, will direct him to the Press Information Bureau or will seek the permission of the Secretary of the department before meeting the press.

(3) Whenever it is proposed to release an official information to the press, or to hold a press conference or press briefing, or to give publicity to an official report, resolution or any other publication, the department concerned will consult the accredited information officer in advance. The accredited information officer will meet the authorised officials of the department from time to time and collect information worthy of publicity.

(4) Detailed procedure in respect of matters mentioned in this para, as laid down by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, should be followed.

101. *Use of restrictive classification for printed reports etc -*

(1) The restrictive classification 'For official use only' will not be assigned to any printed report, pamphlet or compilation unless it contains information which it would not be desirable in the public interest to disclose. In doubtful cases, the test that may be usefully applied is whether the publication, whose circulation is proposed to be restricted to official use only, is such that the Minister would be justified in refusing to lay it before the Parliament.

(2) No official publication (including in electronic form) will be marked 'For official use only' except with the prior approval of the branch officer, who will obtain the orders of the Secretary or Minister in doubtful cases.

102. Use of e-Office must be able to control who is permitted to access e-files or records and in what circumstances, as these may contain personal, commercial or operationally sensitive data. The restrictions on access may also need to be applied to external users like citizens and auditors.
103. The e-Office should have a structure which permits different encryption technologies to be introduced easily.
104. Security of e-files or records also includes the ability to protect them from system failure by means of backup, and the ability to recover the records from backups.
105. The e-Office will have provision for PKI based authentication and authorization of users using Digital signature integration in conformity with IT Act 2000 as amended from time to time. This would imply that all the transactions done through the e-office system would be most secure.
106. Digital signatures (sometimes referred to as electronic signatures) are sequences of characters which, when used with sophisticated secure algorithms procedures and "keys" (a long string of digits analogous to a password), can be used to confirm the integrity of a record or e-file to authenticate the identity of the sender of a record. The provisioning for implementation of digital signatures should have the following.
 - (1) The e-Office must be able to retain the information relating to electronic signatures, encryption and details of related verification agencies.
 - (2) The e-Office must be able to retain and preserve as metadata, details about the process of verification for an electronic signature, including the fact that the validity of the signature was checked, the Certification Authority with which the signature has been validated, the date and time that the checking occurred.
 - (3) The e-Office should be able to store with the electronic record the electronic signature(s) associated with that record, the digital certificate(s) verifying the signature, any confirming counter-signatures appended by the certification authority in such a way that they are capable of being retrieved in conjunction with the record, and without prejudicing the integrity of a private key.

107. SYSTEM ADMINISTRATOR

(1) Each department would designate an officer / clerk to carryout the various administrative functions in the electronic file system of the department, including the following:

- (a) Maintain and update the list of users and related information
- (b) Administer access levels for each user, including cases of transfers
- (c) Manage digital certification facility for each user
- (d) Control workflow in the department for each process
- (e) Process requests for requisitioning of records by other departments and weeding or retaining records beyond the initial term

In addition to the above responsibilities, the system administrator will be responsible for handling of user grievances in relation to any technical snag or user training.

CHAPTER XIV

CHECKS ON DELAYS

108. Review of e-files under call-book/review-later status

(1) Branch officer/ Divisional Head will review the e-files once a quarter, i.e. during the months of January, April, July and October to satisfy himself/herself that no case on which action could have been taken suffers by its inclusion in the call book and, in suitable cases, give directions for the action to be taken

(2) Section officer will review the e-files in the last week of every month that will become ripe for action during the following month

109. Review of e-files pending disposal over seven days

(1) The section officer will review the statement and add remarks on the e-files on the first working day of the succeeding week

(2) Branch officer will review the weekly statement and, where necessary, give suitable directions for expeditious handling of delayed receipts/cases

110. Review of e-files pending disposal over a month

(1) The section officer will review the statement and add remarks on the e-files by the 5th of the month

(2) Each of the officers up to the Joint Secretary will (unless otherwise provided in the departmental instructions) add remarks in the e-file/case as he/she would like to make about latest position and in suitable e-files/cases give directions or make suggestions for expeditious disposal

(3) The Joint Secretary may bring any case included in the monthly statement to the specific notice of higher officers or Minister, either through submission of the monthly statement itself or otherwise, as deemed fit.

111. Communications received from Members of Parliament and VIPs (illustrative list of VIPs at **Appendix** , Court/CAT cases, Court/CAT orders, RTI Requests, Citizen Grievances, Staff Grievances

(1) Under Secretary / Deputy Secretary will review the statement and give directions where necessary on the individual cases

(2) Director / Joint-Secretary will review the statement and give directions where necessary on the individual cases

112. Parliamentary Assurances

(1) Each section in a department will keep a record in the electronic form at **Appendix** of Assurances given by a Minister to either House of Parliament, whether in replies to questions or in the course of discussions on bills, resolutions and other motions. A separate electronic register will be maintained for each House and entries therein will be made session-wise.

(2) The Section Officer will:

(a) scrutinize the registers once a week;

(b) ensure that necessary follow-up action is in fact being taken; and

(c) Submit the registers to the Branch officer every fortnight if the House concerned is in session and once a month otherwise, drawing his special attention to the Assurances which are not likely to be implemented within a period of three months.

(d) take timely action to seek extension of time in case of these Assurances which can not be fulfilled within the available time. The details of each extension so sought will be entered in the Electronic Assurance Register also.

(3) The Branch Officer will keep the higher officers and the Minister informed of the progress made in the implementation of promises and undertaking given by him in Parliament. Cases, in which there is likely to be any delay in the implementation of promise or an undertaking, should be particularly brought to their notice.

113. Check-list of periodical reports --

(1) To ensure timely receipt, preparation and dispatch of periodical reports, each section will maintain two check-lists, one for incoming reports and the other for outgoing reports, in the forms at **Appendices.....** and..... . All periodical reports will be listed in column 2 of the appropriate check-list in the order of their frequency, weekly reports being entered first, fortnightly report next, and so on.

(2) The check-lists will be prepared at the commencement of each year, approved by the Section Officer, shown to the Branch Officer and retained in the system.

(3) The Section Officer will go through the check-list once a week to plan action on items requiring attention during the next week or so. The system will give alerts also in this regard. After a periodical report has been received or dispatched, the relevant entry in the date column of the appropriate check-list will be ticked electronically.

114. Review of periodical reports/returns -

(1) All periodical reports and returns relating to each section will be reviewed at the level of Joint Secretary or above every three years with the following objectives:

- to eliminate those that are unnecessary;
- to redesign those that do not provide information/data in usable form;
- to rationalise/simplify the essential ones by combining two or more of them when possible; and
- to revise the frequency in relation to the need with due regard to constraint of time required for collection of information/data from field levels.

(2) The results of the review during each year will be reported by the section to the O&M Unit by the 7th of April.

115. Responsibility of expeditious disposal of work --

(1) The primary responsibility for expeditious disposal of work and timely submission of arrear and disposal statements rests with the Section Officer. To this end, he will inspect the details of pending receipts (dealing hand-wise) from his MIS dashboard and take such action as may be necessary for expeditious disposal of the pending cases.

(2) The Branch officer also will keep a close watch on the progress of work in the sections under his control by inspecting the details of pending cases (section-wise) from his MIS dashboard.

116. Checks on delays under Desk Officer System – The provisions of this chapter will also govern the Desk pattern of functioning.

117. MIS Dashboard

The MIS dashboard will be used to:

- (1) generate different periodical outgoing reports in pre designed formats
- (2) generate reports/statistics in the form of tables/graphs for review/analysis/planning
- (3) generate pendency reports for effective monitoring by different functionaries
- (4) The information to be displayed by the dashboard, though could be custom designed by each departments, would include the following:

a. Number of cases under following stages of processing, which could be generated on a real-time basis for current status as well as extracted from records for the past position

- (i) No. of total receipts received
- (ii) No. of receipts disposed of
- (iii) No. of receipts pending
- (iv) Details of pending receipts
- (v) Details of pending Parliamentary Assurances
- (vi) Details of pending Court cases
- (vii) Details of pending Parliamentary Committee matters
- (viii) Details of Questions answered in Parliament (both Houses) session-wise (including the complete text of the Question & Reply & also the Note for Supplementaries).
- (ix) Total number of VIP references received during a given month
- (x) Details of pending VIP references

b. Reports and registers, which the user could choose from standard options or design for himself/ herself with various data fields.

c. Exception reporting, wherein again the user could choose the deviations which should be reported as Exceptions and otherwise.

(5) Following could be the sequence of detailed information sought from the dashboard:

- a. Number of cases

b. List of cases, which could be arranged on the basis of sub-head, sender, desk, pending time or alphabetically, chronologically etc.

c. Case e-file and its related functionalities

118. FIFO – First In First Out

The FIFO rule will apply generally in all the cases and essentially in those cases which involve a public interface e.g issue of Passports, issue of import license, release of grants to NGOs under various schemes of GOI etc.

(1) The scheme of First In First Out should be followed with respect to receipt/ e-file received and disposed at each desk.

(2) In case, any receipt/e-file is taken for processing out-of-turn, the previous receipt/ e-file(s) should not remain pending for more than a specified number of hours/ days, unless specific reasons are recorded to that effect.

(3) The system would monitor the skipping and periodically display the cases where the time limits have been crossed.

(4) Exceptions to this system may be allowed in case of time bound receipts such as parliamentary questions, CAT/Court Cases/ VIP references etc.

119. In case a current e-file has reached a stage when no action can or need be taken to expedite its disposal for at least 6 months (e.g., cases held up in law courts) or an e-file in which a review is contemplated after a period of 6 months, it may be transferred to the review-later/call-book status with the approval of an officer not below the level of Branch Officer/ Divisional Head.

120. When an e-file in the call book status becomes ripe for action or if action has to be restarted as a sequel to an unexpected development, e.g., receipt of a communication from the party concerned earlier than expected, it will be moved to the active status. The date of commencement of such reopened cases, however, will be the date of occurrence of the development or that of the first note leading to the reopening of the case

121. *Time limits* - Time Limits will be fixed for disposal of as many types of cases as possible handled in the Department through departmental instructions. As a general rule, no official shall keep a case pending with him/her for more than seven working days unless higher limits have been prescribed for specific types of cases through departmental instructions. In the event of a case remaining with an official for

more than the stipulated time limit, an explanation for keeping it shall be recorded in the note portion by him/her. The system of exception reporting will be introduced to monitor the disposal of receipts.

122. Handling of Public/Staff Grievances -

- (1) All officers of the level of Deputy Secretary and above will redress public grievances pertaining to the divisions under their charge. They will view public grievances with sympathy and make special efforts to decide on such cases expeditiously.
- (2) Each Ministry/ Department/ Public Sector Undertaking/ Autonomous Body of the government will set up Internal Grievance Redress Machinery for public as well as staff.
- (3) A senior officer of the level of Joint Secretary or above should be designated as Joint Secretary/ Director of Public Grievances. An officer of the level of Deputy Secretary/Director should be designated as the Staff Grievance Officer.
- (4) The name, designation, room number, telephone number, etc., of the Director of Grievances should be displayed prominently at the Reception and some other convenient place in the office building of Ministry/Department/ Public Sector Undertaking/ Autonomous Body so that the public are made fully aware of it.
- (5) Every Wednesday of the week should be observed strictly as a meeting less day. The Director of Grievances and other officers of the level of Deputy Secretary and above should remain in their offices during specified hours (1000 hours to 1300 hours) on every Wednesday to receive and hear grievances of the members of the public.
- (6) The receptionists, security personnel and peons will be given suitable instructions about the meeting less day so as to allow the members of the public to meet officers on that day without prior appointment.
- (7) A locked complaint box will be placed at the Reception for convenient registration of complaints by members of the public. The box must be opened by the designated officer at regular intervals.
- (8) In the interest of expeditious disposal of grievances the Director of Grievances will be empowered to call for papers/ documents of cases pending for more than three months and take decisions with the approval of the Secretary of the Ministry/ Department or Head of the Public Sector Undertaking/ Autonomous Body.
- (9) (a) Each grievance petition will be acknowledged within 15 days. Even if no action is warranted on a petition, a reply intimating the stand of the organisation must be sent to the petitioner.
(b) Time limits will be fixed through departmental instructions for disposal of various types of public/Staff grievances which are handled in the department with due regard to the minimum time needed

for each type.

(c) While sending replies communicating final decision rejecting a grievance/petition, the reason or the rule(s) under which it has been rejected will be communicated to the petitioner alongwith details of the appellate authority wherever applicable.

(10) Ministries/Departments will analyse grievances received by them with a view to identifying the major grievance prone areas and devising corrective measures so as to reduce the scope of recurrence of grievances. Assistance of the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances may be obtained to study these areas for improvement.

(11) Publicity will be given about the grievance redress machinery in the Ministries/Departments/ Public Sector Undertakings/ Autonomous Bodies.

(12) The feedback mechanism and the monitoring system for grievance redress will be strengthened, in view of the time limits fixed as per sub para 9 above. Ministries/Departments will also ensure timely submission of reports/ returns about the redress of grievances to the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances.

(13) The machinery and work relating to public grievances and the statistics relating to receipt/disposal of public grievances shall form a part of the Annual Action Plan and the Annual Administrative Report of the Ministry/Department.

(14) (a) All public grievances received directly or through MPs/VIPs/Directorate of Public Grievances (Cabinet Secretariat)/Department of AR&PG/e-mail etc. will be registered and processed in the computerised Public Grievance Redress And Monitoring System (PGRAMS). Action to acknowledge and dispose of the grievances according to time norms fixed will be taken. Acknowledgement will contain registration number of the grievance.

(b) The progress and final disposal of the grievance will be indicated in PGRAMS so that the petitioner can access the information through Internet.

(15) The record of grievances will be retained in the computer for one year after the date of final disposal of the grievances.

CHAPTER XV

INSPECTIONS

123. *Purpose and periodicity* -

(1) Each Section/Desk in the Department will be inspected once a year to ascertain to what extent the provisions of this manual and the instruction issued thereunder are being followed. Each Department will also inspect once a year all attached and subordinate offices under their administrative control through their designated senior officers. Questionnaires at Appendices 55 and 56 will be used for this purpose.

(2) So far as electronic records are concerned, the inspection of the same will be conducted by a team of 5 officers namely (i) System Administrator (ii) A representative of National Informatics Centre (NIC) (iii) A representative of National Archives of India (NAI) (iv) Director (Admn.) (v) Divisional Head concerned. Questionnaire at Appendix 57 will be used for this purpose.

(3) In addition to the information mentioned at sub-paras (1) and (2), the Administration/ Establishment section will also generate information in the form given at Appendix 58 which will be updated monthly and will be used by the Department as a tool of Management Information System.

(4) The information generated in the form at Appendices 56 and 58 for the entire Department will be consolidated by the Coordination Section. The information culled from the above will then be submitted to the Secretary of the Department in the form given at Appendix 59 (Executive Summary) every quarter to facilitate monitoring of key issues.

(5) Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances will also undertake a study in two or three Departments each year for sharing ideas and experiences in the field of Establishment, Administration, Public Grievance redress, Audit and O&M for mutual benefit.

124. *Inspecting authorities* - As far as possible, the inspection will be conducted by an officer of or above the level of Under Secretary/Desk officer who does not handle any part of the work of the Section/Desk to be inspected.

125. *Inspection programme* -

- (1) The Coordination Unit will draw up in advance every year, for the approval of the Secretary, a monthly programme of inspection of Sections/Desks to be undertaken during the following year, indicating the names of the inspecting officers and the months in which the inspections would be carried out.
- (2) The programme will also include a few Sections/Desks to be inspected by the officer in charge of the Coordination Unit.
- (3) The Coordination Unit will also arrange for a joint inspection of record room by an officer of the Department and a representative of the National Archives of India, besides the officer in charge of Coordination Unit.
- (4) At the end of every quarter, the Coordination Unit will submit to the Secretary, a report indicating whether the programme of inspections for the previous quarter was carried out.

126. *Inspection report -*

- (1) The inspecting officer will present his report to the higher officer concerned endorsing a copy each to the Divisional Head, the O&M officer and the Section Officer/Desk functionary concerned. In the case of record room, a copy of the inspection report will also be endorsed to the National Archives of India.
- (2) The Section Officer/Desk functionary will take necessary action to rectify the defects pointed out in the inspection report and submit a compliance report to his superior within fifteen days, endorsing a copy to the Divisional Head and the O&M officer. The Divisional Head will review the action taken on inspection reports.
- (3) The higher level, to which the inspection reports and the compliance reports should be submitted, will be governed by departmental instructions.
- (4) The O&M officer will report the significant points, if any, emerging from the inspection reports to the Secretary. In addition, he will bring to the notice of the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances by the 30th April each year:
 - (a) number of sections/desks/units inspected during the preceding financial year;

- (b) name of the attached/ subordinate offices inspected;
- (c) deficiencies noticed in the existing procedures;
- (d) suggestions received for improvement of procedures common to all departments, together with his comments thereon; and
- (e) any other points of general application emerging from the inspections.

127. *Supplementary inspection* -

- (1) Apart from the annual general inspection (vide para123), departmental instructions may prescribe supplementary inspections for all or any of the Sections/Desks, with special reference to the nature of their work.
- (2) Surprise inspections may be organised in accordance with such instructions as the Secretary may lay down.

128. *Periodic inspections by supervisory officers* - The inspections as provided in paras 135 to 139 should be supplemented by periodic inspections by the Branch Officer/Deputy Secretary/Joint Secretary who is responsible for the effective functioning of the Sections/Desk in his charge.

CHAPTER XVI

GOVERNANCE REFORMS

129. Voice/ Meeting Management as Legal Permissible Channel

- (1) As mentioned under the definitions chapter, Dak would include any communication received through e-mail.

130. RTI

The system will be R.T.I. compliant.

131. Meeting and Committee Management

- (1) A platform gets created for setting-up meetings, wherein a time is proposed by the chair and the invitees agree or propose a new time for the meeting. Different color shading against names might reflect status i.e. pending review, pending confirmation, confirmed, proposed new time etc. Once confirmed the final notices gets sent to all. In case there is no common consensus reached, the proposed chair of the meeting may decide on his/ her own and the confirmations could be seen on the platform.
- (2) In case the Chairperson deems fit, the meeting could be held over tele-, video-conferencing or chat room on the system.
- (3) The minutes of the meeting are drafted and posted on the platform, which the members have to review and confirm or add comments within a specified number of days, otherwise the minutes would be deemed to have been approved and taken-up for processing.

132. Intervention by Senior Officers to pull-up e-file

- (1) The system will provide for any officer to pull-up e-file(s) from the desk of any of his junior functionary.
- (2) The reason for the same will also have to be recorded in the system.
- (3) The incident will be recorded in the departmental MIS.

133. Templates / Drafts

- (1) Procedures will be laid for an electronic form used for collecting data that can be integrated, managed, processed and/ or transmitted through a department's information processing system.

(2) Forms could be Optional as approved by a designated authority for non-mandatory use and Standard for mandatory use.

(3) Guidelines for approval for new, revised or cancelled forms, exceptions to forms and generating electronic forms will be issued.

(4) The benefits would be:

- a. Increased productivity and economy through simplified, cost-effective practices and procedures for designing, creating, printing, electronically generating, stocking, distributing, using and managing forms
- b. The elimination of unnecessary forms and duplication
- c. Improved Government-wide communication and economics in inter-department coordination

CHAPTER XVII
MISCELLANEOUS

134. *Annual Action Plan*

(1) Formulation - In order that the programmes and projects undertaken by a Department are implemented in a systematic manner, each Department will formulate an Annual Action Plan in the month of January. The Action Plan will reflect the manner and time-frame of action with month-wise break-up of targets to be achieved in respect of each of the activities to be performed during the ensuing financial year.

(2) Accountability - The action plan will identify the levels of accountability, both direct and supervisory, for implementation of each action point. Achievement of action plan targets will form an important element of performance appraisal of each employee.

(3) Review - Each officer will review the progress made against action points pertaining to his charge every week and take appropriate steps for effective and timely implementation of the tasks assigned. Secretary of the Department will review the performance of the Department as a whole in respect of the Action Plan items in a monthly meeting with senior officers.

135. *Citizen's/Client's Charter*

Citizen's/Client's Charter is a document which represents a systematic effort to focus on the commitment of the Organisation towards its Citizens/Clients in respect of Standard of Services, Information, Choice and Consultation, Non-discrimination and Accessibility, Grievances Redress, Courtesy and Value for Money. This also includes expectations of the Organisation from the Citizen/Client for fulfilling the commitment of the Organisation.

A Charter comprises of the following components –

- (i) Vision and Mission statement;
- (ii) Details of Business transacted by the Organisation;
- (iii) Details of Customers/Clients;
- (iv) Statement of services provided to each citizen/client group Separately;
- (v) Details of Grievances Redress Mechanism and how to access the same; and
- (vi) Expectation from the citizen/client.

Activities relating to the Charters as detailed below will be included in the Annual Report of the Ministry/Department.

- (i) Action taken to formulate the Charter for the Ministry/Department and its subordinate formations;
- (ii) Action taken to implement the Charter;
- (iii) Details of Training Programmes, Workshops, etc. held for proper implementation of Charter;
- (iv) Details of publicity efforts made and awareness campaigns organised on Charter for the citizens/Clients;
- (v) Details of internal and external evaluation of implementation of Charter in the Organisation and assessment of the level of satisfaction among Citizen/Clients; and
- (vi) Details of revisions made in Charter on the basis of internal and external review.

136. Official language for purposes of Government work -

(1) In accordance with the provisions of Article 343 of the Constitution, Hindi became the official language of the Union with effect from the 26th January, 1965. However, the Official Languages Act, 1963 permits the continued use of English for specified purposes of Government work subject to certain conditions. The Official Languages Rules, 1976 have been framed under the Official Languages Act, 1963. Instructions are issued from time to time by the Department of Official Languages to ensure compliance with them. Each year an annual programme of action is also issued.

(2) Each Department is expected to ensure that the provisions of the abovementioned Act, Rules and instructions issued thereunder as well as the annual programme of action as prepared by the Department of Official Languages are strictly observed. In particular the following should be ensured:-

- (a) Communications to the offices of State Governments and the Administration of the Union Territories or persons residing in Region (A) i.e. Bihar, Chattisgarh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttaranchal and Uttar Pradesh, as well as the Union Territories of Delhi and Andaman & Nicobar Islands, and in Region (B) i.e. Gujarat, Maharashtra and Punjab as well as the Union Territory of Chandigarh as defined in sub-rules (2)(f) and (g) of the Official Languages Rules 1976, shall be made in Hindi. In case a person

responsible for drafting a letter does not have sufficient knowledge of Hindi the draft prepared by him in English will be translated into Hindi and the letter will be issued in Hindi.

- (b) Communications to the offices of the remaining States and Union Territories as well as persons residing therein may be made in English.
- (c) Correspondence with Central Government offices located in all regions shall be made in Hindi in the proportions as fixed in the Annual Programme issued by the Department of Official Languages.
- (d) All communications received in Hindi, irrespective of their source, shall be replied to in Hindi.
- (e) For noting as well as drafting purposes other than those specified herein before an official is permitted to use Hindi or English, according to his convenience.
- (f) An official who does not possess working knowledge of the language used in a case, is provided with a translation or a precis thereof in the language he knows and employs for the purpose of Government work.
- (g) Both Hindi and English are used for:-
 - (i) Resolutions, general orders, rules, administrative and other representations, notifications and press communiqués;
 - (ii) Administrative and other reports and officials papers laid before a House of Parliament; and
 - (iii) Contracts and agreements executed as well as licences, permits, notices and form of tenders.

137. *Departmental instructions* -

(1) This manual lays down the essential procedures for efficient management, i.e. processing, handling and control of receipts/cases/complaints etc. in the Central Secretariat. To provide for sufficient flexibility, the manual suggests the issue of departmental instructions which could supplement or vary, within broad limits, the prescribed procedures to suit special conditions and requirements. The various provisions of the manual which visualise issue of departmental instructions are listed in **Appendix**.....

(2) Each section may devise suitable arrangements, including inspections to ensure compliance with departmental instructions issued by it.

138. *Compilation/consolidation of orders / instructions:-*

(1) In April every year, each section will prepare a list of subjects in respect of which orders issued by it require compilation/consolidation.

(2) The list will be submitted to the Joint Secretary who, after approval of list, will fix a time-bound programme for completion of compilation/consolidation work. The Section concerned would be responsible for completion of compilation/consolidation within the time limit so laid.

139. *Review of rules, regulations and manuals -*

(1) Every section will maintain an up to date list of rules, regulations and manuals administered by it and take action for their review, every three years.

(2) The list will be submitted to the Joint Secretary who, after approval of list, will fix a time-bound programme for completion of compilation/consolidation work.

140. *Maintenance/transfer of records in the personal offices of Ministers -*

(1) Procedure for maintenance of records in the personal offices of Ministers -

(a) Following records will be maintained by the personal offices of Ministers:

(i) A diary register in the form at Appendix 3 to enter particulars of reference received in the office and also to record their disposal;

(ii) A despatch register in the form at Appendix 61 to show the letters/notes issued from the personal offices;

(iii) E-file Movement Diary in the form at Appendix 62; and

(iv) Folders containing office copies of orders issued by the Minister/Private Secretary, serially numbered.

The above records will be in addition to e-files and folders for papers of secret nature connected with the Cabinet meetings, etc. and a separate diary maintained for these. Ministers may prescribe additional folders, registers etc. if necessary, for instance for parliamentary debates, personal speeches made by them, etc. The personal staff will also maintain such other registers as prescribed in the Manual of Office Procedure or otherwise

from time to time, e.g., trunk-call/STD register, overtime register, etc. All these registers will be maintained electronically in pre-designed formats.

(b) instructions laid down by the Cabinet Secretariat in the 'Rules of Procedure in regard to the Proceedings of the Cabinet', and in the 'Departmental Security Instructions' issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs shall be followed so far as maintenance of classified documents is concerned.

(2) Procedure for transfer of records/papers when Ministers demit office :-

(a) The instructions laid down by the Cabinet Secretariat in the 'Rules of Procedure in regard to the Proceedings of the Cabinet' will be followed so far as transfer of records pertaining to Cabinet meetings are concerned. As regards other classified documents and papers, the procedure prescribed in Departmental Security Instructions issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs will be followed. As per these instructions, copies of classified papers should be passed on to the appropriate authorities. In case of doubt as to whom these papers should be transferred, the PS to Minister will transfer such papers to the Secretary to the Ministry/Department alongwith separate inventories of such papers transferred to various authorities and to the Secretary. The register, maintained for entering the particulars of secret papers will also similarly be transferred to the Secretary or his Private Secretary. The Secretary may, in turn, pass on all these papers to the Joint Secretary in charge of vigilance for safe custody. These papers will be handed over to the succeeding Minister as soon as he takes over the office.

(b) As regards other papers, the following procedure will be followed :

(i) The folders containing office copies of orders issued by the Minister/Private Secretary, serially numbered, will be handed over to the O&M officer of the department by the PS to the Minister with the list of such papers. These papers will remain in the safe custody of the O&M officer. These papers will be periodically reviewed and weeded out as and when they are no longer required, with the approval of Secretary, so as to ensure that unnecessary papers do not accumulate.

(ii) Records like the registers and diaries and other papers shall also be taken over by the O&M officer of the department and remain in his custody till the next PS of the succeeding Minister takes over charge to whom they may then be handed over.

(iii) The entire records need not physically be taken over by the O&M officer but a list of records and papers left by the relinquishing PS to Minister may be made available by the latter to the O&M officer, the records themselves being kept under lock and key in the room generally occupied by the PS to Minister. The O&M officer or his section will, however, check that all the records are there in the almirah(s) as mentioned in the list.

(3) Miscellaneous -

(a) The personal section shall prepare at the end of every month a list of e-files pending with the Minister which will be submitted to PS who will suitably remind the Minister for their disposal.

(b) The existing manual system provides that if an officer leaves a file or any paper with the Minister for seeking his orders, or for any other purpose, informally, PA/PS to that officer will report the brief particulars of that file etc. to the PS to Minister in a pre-designed format, and PS to Minister will on receipt of these particulars, satisfy himself that such a file has been received by the Minister and watch its further movement. But in the e-office system it won't be possible for any officer to leave the file with the Minister informally.

(4) It shall be the specific responsibility of the Private Secretary or whosoever may be the senior most officer in the Personal Office of the Minister to ensure that the instructions are observed.

141. Review of forms and procedures - It is necessary to set up a mechanism for review of measures already taken, at short periodic intervals with an eye to the possibility of further simplifying forms and procedures so as to make them more transparent to those who are involved in its use and ensure better enforcement of accountability. Unnecessary or avoidable obfuscation of issues and processes through which decisions are taken should be avoided.

142. Modernization of Offices - The Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances has been acting as a catalyst by providing funds to Ministries/Departments and their attached offices and Statutory bodies located in Delhi (but not to Training Institutions and Subordinate Offices)

under a Plan Scheme for modernisation of selected section/unit based on suitable layout plans. The scheme envisages improvement in work environment by adopting a holistic approach through optimum use of space, effective supervision, cost-effective and space efficient records management, efficient service to public, etc. This is a model Scheme and is supplemental to the modernization efforts being made by the various Ministries/Departments.

143. Procedure for processing reports of Commissions/Committees and other expert bodies -

In order to ensure expeditious processing and implementation of the recommendations made in the reports of Commission/Committees and other expert bodies including those of the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances, the procedure given in the **Appendix.....** should be strictly followed.

The main feature of this procedure is the appointment of an "Empowered Committee" with a representative on it from each of the Ministries concerned which will :-

-consider the report as a whole directly without the traditional note-based examination at a number of levels in every department or other agency concerned;

-take firm decisions;

-submit concrete proposals for the Minister's/Cabinet's approval where necessary; and

-ensure that the processing of the report is completed and firm decisions are taken within 3 months of its receipt as far as possible.

144. Preparation of Induction Material - Every Ministry/Department should prepare 'induction material' under the guidance of the Joint Secretary of administration for the use of not only their officers but for the convenience of other Ministries/Departments also in making inter-departmental references. The 'induction material' should clearly spell out the functions and structure of the organisation, detailed work distribution among various divisions and sections with their names, room numbers, location, officers incharge, telephone numbers, etc. The 'induction material' should be revised at periodic intervals so as to keep it up-to-date.

145. *Composition and functions of O&M units in the Ministries/Departments -*

(1) While Central organisation like Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances can provide initiative, information, advice, and so on, the main task of evolving and implementing reform measures will have to continue to be the responsibility of O&M Unit within Ministries/Departments. Therefore, if improvements in administration are to be effected, essential pre-requisite will be designating either the Administration Section or Coordination Section as the O&M unit in the Ministries/Departments.

(2) An illustrative list of functions to be performed by O&M Units is given in **Appendix.....** They should also try to computerise work relating to O & M functions for better monitoring and send a report about O&M activities annually to Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances in the proforma given at **Appendix.....** The Annual Report will pertain to the period from 1st April to 31st March of the year and it should be sent to Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances by 30th of April of the following year.

(3) For O&M studies Ministries/Departments they will be guided by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances. As regards the work relating to work measurement studies is concerned, the units will be guided by the Staff Inspection Unit of the Department of Expenditure.

CHAPTER XVIII
TRANSITION PHASE

146. *What happens to the existing physical records?:*

- (1) As and when the Department switches over to e-office system, the existing physical files will have to be scanned/digitized & put into the system. Obviously this would be a gigantic task. Therefore it is stipulated that :
 - (i) all current/live files may be scanned/digitized
 - (ii) semi-current files will be scanned/digitized on need based basis
 - (iii) all non-live files will be scanned/digitized on need based basis
 - (iv) all closed physical files which contain decision of longer lasting value from the angle of running the Department may also be scanned/digitized.
 - (v) all important Treaties/Agreements etc. may also be scanned/digitized.
 - (vi) the physical files & other documents (which have been so scanned/digitized) may be handled in line with the provisions of CSMOP.
- (2) While entering the scanned e-files in the system, care should be taken to ensure that the system should be able to trace the e-files on any of the following parameters:-
 - (a) number of the e-file
 - (b) date of opening the physical file
 - (c) date of scanning
 - (d) as many catch words as possible from out of the subject matter of the file
 - (e) any other parameter(s), which is important according to the department concerned.

Abbreviations

1.	B.I.S.	Bureau of Indian Standards
2.	C.R.	Central Registry
3.	CAT	Central Administrative Tribunal
4.	CS-MOP	Central Secretariat Manual of Office Procedure
5.	Dy. No.	Diary Number
6.	D.O.	Demi Official
7.	D.F.A	Draft for Approval
8.	DAR&PG	Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances
9.	D.R.R.	Departmental Record Room
10.	e-mail	Electronic Mail
11.	EPAX	Electronic Private Automatic Exchange
12.	G.P.F.	General Provident Fund
13.	F.R.	Fresh Receipt
14.	I.F.C.	Information & Facilitation Counter
15.	I.D.	Inter Departmental
16.	I.S.D.	International Subscriber Dialing
17.	L.A.N.	Local Area Network
18.	L.C.D.	Liquid Crystal Display
19.	M.P.	Member of Parliament
20.	M.O.P.	Manual of Office Procedure
21.	N.A.I.	National Archives of India
22.	N.S.O.	Non-Secretariat Organisation
23.	N.I.C.	National Informatics Centre
24.	O&M	Organisation & Methods

25.	O.M.	Office Memorandum
26.	O.H.P.	Overhead Projector
27.	O.P.A.	Office Procedure Automation
28.	P.U.C.	Paper Under Consideration
29.	P.C.	Personal Computer
30.	P.S.	Private Secretary
31.	P.A.	Personal Assistant
32.	R&I	Receipt & Issue
33.	S.V.H.	Safety of Human Life (Urgency Grading in Telegrams)
34.	S.T.D.	Subscriber Trunk Dialing
35.	S.F.S.	Single E-file System

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