BUREAUCRATS AND POLITICIANS

In the previous chapters, we studied the factors relating to bureaucrats as individuals and those relating to the organisation in which the bureaucrat function. But the study of these two dimensions alone is not enough to understand the role of bureaucracy in development. As Prof. Ramashray Roy aptly says:

... the factors relating to the administrators as individuals and those relating to the functioning of the administrative system alone will not give us a complete understanding of the role of bureaucracy in ... development. We need to know the nature of interaction between the administration and the environment it operates in. In this process of interaction the organisation has to contend with the operational limitations the environment imposes on the desirability as well as on the feasibility of certain actions proposed or undertaken by the organisation.

Thus, the study of bureaucracy is not complete without a study of its environment in which the bureaucracy functions. Though the study of bureaucratic environment has a number of important inter-related dimensions, the present study will be limited to the political environment because it is

the political leaders who determine systemic goals in a democratic system and
direct the operation of government and administration. And the goal realization
of the system is dependent upon the proper relationship between the political
leaders and the bureaucrat, and the exploration of certain critical
dimensions of their relationship is central to any enquiry about bureaucratic
performance. 2

In this chapter, we shall study the various kinds of pressures
exerted upon the bureaucrat by the politicians and political leaders and the
way the bureaucrat deals with these pressures. We shall also study the
consequences of these pressures upon the bureaucrat as individual and
bureaucracy as an institution designed to serve the goals of nation-building
and socio-economic change.

To gain a clear understanding of the problem posed above, it is necessary
to start with the politico-bureaucratic relationship in India in its
historical context. The bureaucracy in its modern form was established in
India by the Britishers and it was with the help of bureaucracy that the

Britishers maintained their hold in India. During the British period, the bureaucracy was not subject to political control and a bureaucrat was accorded full protection to sustain his authority as the pivot of colonial administration. Although the Governor-General was at the helm of affairs and was vested with the power of supervision and control, he was not given the authority to initiate disciplinary action against a delinquent bureaucrat. That power was reserved with the Crown exercisable through the Secretary of State for India. Secure within this framework, a bureaucrat had little or no problem in assisting the government with diligence, probity and to the best of his ability.

But such a role of the bureaucrat was resented by the political leaders in India. To the political leaders, the bureaucrat were the agents of foreign imperialist rulers, working in the interest of foreign power at the cost of national interest. They were critical of the bureaucratic machinery and had a feeling of suspicion, distrust, and hostility towards it. But after the achievement of independence in 1947, there took place a radical change in the situation. With independence, we adopted the parliamentary system of government where the bureaucracy had to function under the direction and control of the political leaders. The politicians, after independence, found the bureaucracy as the only instrument available to them in their programmes of development and the bureaucrats, on the other hand, had no other alternative
but to accept their new role of functioning under political direction.

Moreover, the achievement of independence and the adoption of democratic and parliamentary form of government have changed the role of both the politicians and the bureaucrats. The role of the politicians has been changed from organising agitation to managing the affairs of the state, and operating government and fulfilling people's social and economic aspirations and demands. The bureaucrats, on the other hand, are to come down to the people, not with the idea to rule, but with the idea to serve, and in this task of service they are to be guided and directed by the political leaders. Herein lies the importance of the relationship of mutual trust, understanding and cooperation between the political leaders and the bureaucrats. But how far such relationship of mutual trust and understanding has developed in India is a matter of anybody's guess. If the accounts given by the national dailies and the public discussions are of any indication, then it can be said that such relationship of mutual trust and understanding has not only not developed in India but also worsened. Frequently, it is found that ministers and political leaders, when faced with the criticism of poor performance, generally blame

3 On this subject, see the recent letter by Shri A.K. Chatterjee, a senior officer of the Bihar cadre of the I.A.S., addressed to the Chief Minister of Bihar, reproduced in Appendix D.
the administrative machinery and civil servants who cannot defend themselves in the legislature. The bureaucrats are made a scapegoat by the politicians, press and the society in general. As Prof. Subramaniam writes:

Too often, there is a tendency on the part of the political leaders to be contemptuous about the role of the Civil Servants. Too often also, there is a tendency on the part of the interested sections in the press to paint the image of the Civil Service and the political system in lurid colours. Sensationalism and scandalising are the order of the day. Good, honest work, amelioration of distress, and positive achievement in welfare administration do not get any recognition in the press whereas minor deviations from established procedures are magnified beyond all proportion. Official arrangements for propaganda are treated with scorn and the press *** plays to the gallery to get cheap popularity by contemptuous comments on administration and scurrilous attacks against the political and administrative executives. The same is true in the references made to the services in Parliament and in the State Legislatures. The Civil Service ought to be nameless and faceless so far as legislature is concerned, but it is a matter of disappointment that in this country, ill-informed and irresponsible criticism of the Civil Service, which is not in a position to answer back, is indulged in the legislatures. Parliamentary and Legislative immunity are excellent principles but our democracy must also learn that irresponsibility and impunity in criticism of administration is likely not only to lead to a weakening of initiative and to develop frustration among the administrators but

---

also to ineffectiveness in the political system to translate the ideals of democracy into practice. 5

Similarly, G.D. Khosla, a reputed ex-civil servant, presents an alarming and distressing picture of the state of affairs regarding the relation between political leaders and civil servants in the following words:

I have spent no less than fifty years in various departments of the Establishment, and I have been associated with hundreds of civil servants. I have a deep and enduring feeling for them, and I am grievously pained to see them collapsing and disintegrating under the incessant bulldozer of self-seeking politicians. *They are corrupt. They are arrogant. They are power hungry. They are unpatriotic, reactionary, obstructionist, and they are (the Devil take them) disloyal.* 6

When I survey the administrative scene I find it barren of ideas (where is the time to sit down and think when you have to dance attendance on these changes?); the old dedication and efficiency vanishing (chaos); a total lack of initiative (why should I stick my neck out?); integrity and probity were shadows of their past reality (what is there in it for me?); and a general overall flaccidity (I am trying to be loyal). 6

Though the above mentioned quotations from V. Subramaniam and G.D.


Rhodes indicate the nature and extent of political pressures upon the bureaucrats, they are not something unique to India or Meghalaya. They are an inherent feature of the democratic system and are all-pervasive in administration in all developing countries. In a democracy, two sets of functionaries with different training and attitudes need to function in close co-operation with one another. The set of functionaries is that of the politicians and political leaders, the other set being that of the bureaucrats. The bureaucrats are the permanent executives who, by habit and training, are required to judge the merit of particular cases in the light of impersonal and universal standards that are already laid down for their guidance. The politicians, on the other hand, are not the permanent executives. They are not selected but elected and for getting elected, they depend upon the verdict of the people. Since their future depends upon the people, they spend a substantial amount of money, time and energy in nurturing their respective constituencies and the people whose verdict they seek from time to time in order to continue in power. For nurturing the constituency or keeping the people satisfied, the politicians must bestow some favours (may be legal or

---

7. For a vivid picture of political pressure upon the bureaucrats in a developing country see Ataur Rahman Khan's, "Spurious Bureaucracy" (Two Years of Ministry), (Oceana: Nauroj Kittibhkan, 1972).
extra-legal) on the people or at least on their supporters in the constituency.

But the politicians by themselves cannot bestow any favour directly. In doing
this they depend upon the bureaucrats and consequently, they put pressure
upon them. This poses a dilemma for the bureaucrats because if they stick to
rules and regulations, they are bound to create dissatisfaction in the minds
of the clientele and invite displeasure of the politicians who are in a
position to take revenge on them. On the other hand, if they depart too much
from the bureaucratic rules and regulations and succumb to such pressure, legal
national criteria of bureaucracy will be sacrificed, resulting in "... highly
personalized administration creating in its wake a situation where favouritism,
power considerations, and extra-organizational criteria are likely to influence
the decision-making process". 8 This will endanger the organizational viability
of the administration as well as its goal achievement. 9

After a discussion of the nature and mechanics of political pressures
and influences on the administration in general, an attempt is made in the
remainder of the chapter to study the political pressures which operate on

9. Ibid., p. 97.
the higher bureaucracy in Meghalaya. In studying political pressures, a number of questions need to be answered: How frequently do the politicians exert pressures upon the bureaucrat? What are the various types of pressures? What are the possible consequences a bureaucrat has to face if he does not submit to pressures? How does a bureaucrat deal with political pressures?

For a study of the frequency of political pressures, a question regarding the operation and frequency of political pressure was asked to the bureaucrat and it was found that none of the bureaucrats denied the operation of political pressures, although they differed in identifying the degree of frequency. While 34.55 percent of the bureaucrats consider political pressures to be very frequent and frequent, 19.09 percent of the bureaucrats consider them to be less frequent and 11.02 percent consider them to be least frequent.

As a whole, in our study, 69.10 percent of the bureaucrats find high frequency of political pressures. Another thing to be noted here is that bureaucrats working in the field consider political pressures to be more frequent than the bureaucrats working in the Secretariat or headquarters. The bureaucrats working in the headquarters are engaged in policy formulation and not policy

---

10. For the question, see Appendix C.
11. See Table 5a.
implementation, and consequently, they are relatively free from political pressures. The task of policy implementation is vested in field units and, hence, they are more pressured by the politicians. In this study, no marked difference is found between the responses of technical and non-technical bureaucrats about the frequency of political pressures.

However, a question that arises here is: for whom do the politicians exert pressure upon the bureaucrats? Do they seek their own interest or the interest of their supporters or of the people of the constituency in general or of all the three?

In a democratic set-up, politicians being the representatives of the people, are expected to look after the interests of the people whom they represent. This is the universalistic norm followed in a democratic set-up. But politicians, being human, may deviate from this universalistic norm and may follow the particularistic norm i.e., they may seek only their own interests or the interests of their supporters, friends and relatives. But how frequently do the politicians deviate from this universalistic norm?
In order to study this aspect of political pressures, we asked a question\textsuperscript{12} to the bureaucrats about the nature and frequency of demands the politicians make upon the bureaucrats. An analysis of the responses\textsuperscript{13} to this question shows that politicians most frequently approach the bureaucrats with the demands of their supporters. This is not surprising because in a democratic set-up politicians must keep their supporters satisfied in order to be in power or to come to power. It is with the help of the supporters only that the politicians can make headway in electoral politics.

However, in the frequency distribution next to the demand of the supporters, we find the demand of the relatives and friends, the demands of the people of the constituency and lastly, the demands concerning the politicians' personal interests and the interests of the members of their family are pointed out by the bureaucrats. Though the demands concerning politicians' personal interests and the interests of the members of their family stand last in the frequency distribution, it is widely considered that politicians in Nagahalaya do follow particularistic norms and pursue parochial interests. On

\begin{itemize}
\item [12.] For the question, see Appendix C.
\item [13.] See Table 5d2.
\end{itemize}
the basis of the data presented in table 5:2, it can safely be asserted that
the politicians in the State tend to pursue parochial interests both for
themselves and others, and accordingly, frequently pressure the bureaucracy
in either furthering or safeguarding such interests.

Types of Political Pressures:

After studying the nature of demands the politicians make upon the
bureaucracy, the next question is: how do the politicians pressure the
bureaucracy? Do they themselves approach the bureaucracy to get done what they
want or do they approach them through some other functionaries? It would be
of considerable significance to study the ways and means followed in exerting
political pressure upon the bureaucracy, and for studying this aspect, we
asked the bureaucrats to identify the important ways through which politicians
exerted pressure upon them. The question elicited a wide variety of responses
which we classified into six categories:

1. Making approach through the political leaders at the higher level

   (M.L.A., M.P., M.S.C., Minister, etc.)

2. Making approach through administrative officers at the higher level.

3. Persuasion through administrators' friends or relatives.
4. Threat of consequences for non-compliance.

5. Promise of better career opportunities to bureaucrats.

6. Pressure through demonstrations like ghannas, dharnas, etc.

It is clear from the aforesaid categories of responses that in the case of the first three categories, pressure is brought upon the bureaucrats not directly but indirectly; whereas, in the case of the last three categories, pressure is brought upon the bureaucrats directly by the politicians themselves.

An analysis of the responses we received reveals that indirect political pressures account for 84.73 percent of the responses while direct type of pressures account for 15.27 percent of the total responses.

Among the indirect types 'making approach through political leaders at the higher level' accounts for the highest percentage of responses (30.17 percent) followed by 'approach through administrative officials at the higher level' (30.53 percent) and 'persuasion through administrators' friends and relatives' (16.03 percent).

---

16. See Table 513.
Among the direct types of pressures, 'threat of consequences' accounts for 6.97 percent of the responses followed by 'promise of better career opportunities' and 'pressure through demonstrations like gherao, dharna, etc.' which account for 6.11 and 2.29 percent of the responses, respectively.

Thus, we find that asking approach through political leaders at the higher level is the most commonly used type of political pressure upon the bureaucrat. This is obvious as politicians are closer to the political leaders who are easily accessible to them. The political leaders are dependent upon the local politicians for their political strength. Consequently, the political leaders, for keeping their political support base intact, try to fulfill the demands of the politicians. This finding corroborates our earlier finding in this chapter that politicians frequently approach the bureaucrat with the demands of their supporters (according to 61.02 percent of the bureaucrat).

Pressure through political intervention may follow different forms of approach. As a bureaucrat commented:

For getting something done from the administration, the politicians contact the political leaders at the higher level who
bring pressures in many ways. Starting from telephone call or recommendation on an application, there may be personal visits and pressure may be in the form of request or order depending upon the rank in the hierarchy wherefrom the order comes.

In this connection, we may refer to an instance cited by A.D. Gorwala in his *Report on Public Administration in India*. In his *Report*, Gorwala pointed out that an M.L.A. made a request to the Collector of a District. The M.L.A., on enquiry, was informed by the Collector that his request could not be entertained because it would detrimentally affect other people. The M.L.A. telephoned the Minister from the Collector’s chamber and informed the Minister that his request was not accepted. The Minister phoned back the Collector and told him that what the M.L.A. had asked for should be done. The Collector wanted to argue but the Minister ended by saying “Well you know my views. You can do what I want or...”

**Political Pressures and the Bureaucrats**
Dealing with them

From the above discussion, it is clear that political pressures and influences operate extensively in the administration, making the position of

---
the bureaucrats delicate and difficult. If the pressure is exerted for legitimate demands, the bureaucrats do not find such difficulty, what they need to do is only to speed up the matter. But if the pressure is for some illegitimate demands or irregular purpose, the bureaucrats find themselves on the horns of a dilemma and it would be interesting to study how do the bureaucrats deal with such dilemmas.

In this study, the bureaucrats were asked to identify the important courses they generally adopt when political pressures are exerted upon them. The responses we received can be classified into seven categories:

1. Express inability because of rules and regulations.
2. Try to deal with the situation themselves but by seeking support from the higher level bureaucrats so as to avoid risk.
3. Refer the case to the higher-ups.
4. Try to deal with the situation themselves but by seeking support from the higher level political leaders.
5. Deal with the situation themselves.
6. Seek transfer to some other place.
7. Appeal to the good sense of the politicians.

16. For question, see Appendix C.
A detailed study of the responses reveals that the bureaucrats follow two courses of action when subjected to political pressures. Firstly, they try to express their inability due to existing rules and regulations and appeal to the good sense of the politicians. Secondly, the bureaucrat either push up the matter or deal with it by seeking support either from higher level bureaucrat or political leaders, so as to avoid risk. There may be two reasons behind the seeking of support from the higher authority. Firstly, if anything goes wrong with a bureaucrat's decision, then he alone cannot be held responsible for that; and secondly, the dissatisfied politician cannot take retaliatory measures against him without the support of higher level authority who has already been consulted by the bureaucrat in arriving at his decision.

An analysis of the responses shows that 27.98 percent and 2.98 percent of the responses account for the first (express inability) and seventh (appeal to the good sense of the politicians) courses of action respectively as listed above. The course of dealing with the situation himself but by seeking support from the higher level administrator accounts for 23.98 percent.

17. See Table 54.
of the responses, while the course of dealing with the situation themselves
but by seeking support from the higher level political leaders accounts for
only 14.93 percent of the responses. Thus, we find that bureaucrats,
confronted with political pressures, prefer to apprise more the administrative
superiors than the political superiors. This is because a bureaucrat is closer
to his bureaucratic superiors than to political leaders, Besides, a bureaucrat
can understand the difficulties of another bureaucrat better than what a
political leader can do.

Again, the percentage of responses (22.98 percent) for the course of
'referring the case to the higher-ups' shows that there is a process of what
is called 'upward deference'. This upward deference takes place because of the
anxiety which is one of the most compelling human drives. Anxiety appears when
something threatens the individual's relations with persons important to him. 10
Political pressures cause anxiety in the minds of the bureaucrats as it
threatens his relationship with the political leaders and the politicians.

"The mechanism used to reduce anxiety," according to Robert Prosthus, includes
avoiding responsibility by dependency upon one's superiors." This is done

generally by forcing the task upward in the hierarchy, so that all responsibility for their performance may be disclaimed. But this is often dysfunctional to the organisation because it reduces the ability to handle anxiety realistically. Moreover, the process of upward deferral also results in the congestion of work at higher level of the hierarchy causing inefficiency and delay.

**Consequences of Unfavorable Response to Political Pressures**

What are the consequences if bureaucrats fail to meet the demands of politicians and to respond favourably to political pressures and influences? For studying this aspect, we asked the bureaucrats to specify important consequences that follow their failure to meet the demands of the politicians.  

The answers received were grouped into four categories:

1. Their service will be adversely affected by transfer, complaint to higher authorities, etc.

2. Co-operation from the politicians will be lacking.

3. Their service records will be spoiled.

4. They will be subject to public denigration, or criticism.

---

20. For question, see Appendix C.
An analysis of the different categories of responses reveals that the consequence of \textit{adversely affecting their service by transfer and complaint to higher authorities} is the most frequently-named consequence which alone accounts for 37.46 percent of the total responses. Transfer is one of the most important means available to the political leaders for punishing a bureaucrat. In a democratic system, transfers and postings of higher bureaucrats are mostly determined by the political executive, but this is not always done on the basis of merit. In some cases, purely political criteria determine the posting of higher bureaucrats. While answering an Assembly question the Chief Minister of Meghalaya himself confessed a case of transfer under political pressure. However, transfer under political pressure is not something unique in Meghalaya. It is the usual practice followed by the politicians in different states and different political systems to pressure the upper echelon of political hierarchy to get an officer transferred if they do not get along with him. Thus, a writer has quoted a minister named Kossa.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textbf{21.} See Table 5a5.
\item \textbf{22.} For a vivid picture of how politicians try to have a non-conforming administrator transferred, see Ataur Rahman Khan’s \textit{Aamatir Budhchayan} (Two Years of Ministry), \textit{On-Cit.}
\item \textbf{23.} \textit{Meghalaya Legislative Assembly Debates}, Vol. III, No.2 (Winter Session)1972, p.54.
\end{itemize}
as saying to a young I.A.S. officer about one of his colleagues named Avasthi: "People of your service are good; but very difficult to get along with. Look at Avasthi. He is so honest and competent and upright, but he is no use to us—whenever I ask for something, he opens the book. I shall have to get him transferred, if we have to win the election." Similarly, about the Civil Service of Pakistan Goodnow writes:

If the officer went along with the request, the favour-seeker would see that the officer was praised at the right time and in front of the right people. If the officer stuck to his principles and refused the request, pressures were applied at the political level to have him transferred to another—perhaps such undesirable post.

Transfers under political pressure are a common feature of personal administration in every state in India, adversely affecting the morale of the administrators and the efficiency of the administrative system. Transfers, especially forced transfers, cause a lot of personal inconvenience and difficulties to a public servant and, consequently, they undermine the honesty.


and the integrity of the public servants. This point was well brought out in the consent of an administrator in our sample who said:

Officers are not solely responsible for the lack of honesty and integrity in the public service. It is the system which sometimes makes an officer dishonest. If an officer is honest and follows the ethics of Civil Service and does not bow down to the political demands he will have to suffer a lot. Instead of being rewarded, he will be subjected to harassment. One of the methods to harass an officer is to transfer him to the interior, so that he gets a lesson. The education of his children will suffer, financial burdens will go up. All these are the rewards for his honesty and integrity and make the officer feel that honesty and integrity are hollow words.

Besides leading to frustration, frequent transfers of an officer under political pressures prevent him from gaining mastery over his job and do not permit him to execute his tasks fully.

The other consequences which result from the non-fulfillment of political demands, 'lack of co-operation' accounts for 29.86 percent of the responses, 'spoiling service records' accounts for 20.60 percent of the responses, and 'public denigration and criticism' accounts for 11.38 percent of the responses.
The lack of cooperation from the politicians seriously hampers the goal achievement of the organisation. The desired national goals in a democratic system cannot be achieved by the bureaucratic structure unless it is supported by the political structure. The implementation of the goals of nation-building and development depends upon the cooperation between the politicians and the bureaucrat, while the bureaucrat implements the authoritatively-determined development programmes, the politicians articulate and aggregate public demands and mobilise public support for the programmes. So long as this cooperative relationship does not exist, the development programmes are bound to suffer.

The other consequences of 'spoiling the service records' and 'public denigration' also affect the functioning of bureaucracy. While spoiling service records makes the bureaucrat hostile towards the politicians and governmental programmes, public denigration undermines self-confidence, and the spirit of enterprise-qualities which are essential for development administration. Analysing the administrative weaknesses in India, A.V.R. Iyengar, an eminent ex-Civil Servant, said:

As a result of certain recent events, the impression has been created that the structure which we adopted from the British, namely,
Civil Service which is non-political and which can serve a government of any complexion and is able to preserve continuity and tradition, has no longer any validity. Civil Servants no longer feel that they will be protected by their Ministers against attacks in Parliament. The consequence of all this is a slowing down in the whole process of decision-making, a reluctance to take bold decisions and a tendency to "pass the buck" around as far as possible. 26

Summary:

Bureaucracy does not operate in a vacuum but in close interaction with society and the political system of which it is a part. In this process of interaction, the bureaucracy has to work within the operational limitations the environment imposes upon the desirability as well as the feasibility of the development programmes. No study of bureaucracy can, therefore, ignore the bureaucratic interactions with its environment. In a society's environment, the political environment is important because it is the political leaders who determine the systemic goals in a democracy. And since the goal realization of the system is dependent upon a proper relationship between the political leaders and the bureaucracy, the exploration of certain critical dimensions

of their relationship is central to any enquiry about bureaucratic performance.
One of these dimensions is the nature and extent of political pressures on
the bureaucracy and the consequences for the functioning of bureaucracy as
an instrument of development progress.

The important questions related to the study of political pressure
are: How frequently do the politicians exert pressures upon the bureaucrats?
For what purposes do the politicians bring pressures? What are the different
sources through which the politicians bring pressures? What consequences
do follow for the bureaucrats for not submitting to political pressures?

Interestingly enough, no bureaucrat in the sample denies the exertion
of political pressures, although they differ among themselves in identifying
the frequency of political pressures. It is surprising that about seventy
percent of the bureaucrats consider political pressures either to be frequent
or very frequent.

This study also shows that pressures are brought frequently upon the
bureaucrate by politicians for furthering the interests of their friends and relatives. Further, the politicians also pursue the interests of the people of their constituency or locality besides their own interests and those of their family members. By pursuing their own interests and the interests of their family members, politicians in Meghalaya tend to deviate from the universalistic norm.

In bringing pressures upon the bureaucratic, politicians prefer indirect sources to direct sources, while indirect sources of pressures through higher level political leaders, higher level administrators and the administrator's friends and relatives account for 84.73 percent of the responses, the direct sources of pressures like threat of consequences, promising better career opportunities and organizing demonstrations like gh Coca, and dharna account for 15.27 percent of the responses.

Irrespective of the source of sources used, the exertion of political pressure put the bureaucrate on the home of a dilemma. If the bureaucrate succumb to political pressure, the legal-rational criteria of bureaucracy are sacrificed and, if they do not, the politicians, who are in a
position to take revenge, will be dissatisfied. In such a dilemma, the courses usually resorted to by the bureaucrat are: "expressing inability due to rules and regulations", "dealing with the situation themselves but by seeking support either from higher level administrator or higher level political leaders", and "pushing the matter upwards in the hierarchy". The other courses of action followed by the bureaucrat are: "dealing with the situation themselves", "seeking transfer to some other place". Among the courses, "pushing up the matter" and "seeking transfer to some other place" are detrimental to the efficient functioning of bureaucracy, while the former results in the congestion of work at the higher level, causing organisational delay and inefficiency, the latter develops an escapist tendency not conducive to healthy bureaucratic functioning.

Further, the study shows that the consequences which follow for not submitting to political pressures such as transfer, spoiling of service records, and non-co-operation and public denigration by political leaders deepen the confidence, initiative and enterprising spirit of the bureaucrat and are detrimental to the development of sound morale and a sense of commitment among them. All these consequences weaken the bureaucracy and do not permit it to act as a vital instrument of socio-economic change.