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GOVERNMENT OF ORISSA
POLITICAL & SERVICES DEPARTMENT

The 18th May 1976

To

All Secretaries to Government/
All Heads of Departments/
All Collectors.

Subject – Contacts by Senior Officers with the Public and Lower Staff – Grievances Cell.

During the past few months most of the senior officers from the Secretariat, from the offices of the Heads of Departments and in the field have been touring in different parts of the State more or less regularly to ensure proper implementation of the 20-Point Economic Programme. One of the principal objectives for which such tours were insisted upon by the Government was to bridge the gap in the formulation of policy at the Governmental level and its implementation at the field level as also to provide a feed-back from the field to the Government about any special difficulties or problems standing in the way of effective implementation of the new policies of Government. While these objectives are by and large being served, Government have felt that in the course of their tours, the senior officers are not giving adequate attention to the grievances of the public nor are opportunities being given to the members for the public or their representatives to meet them and place before them their actual difficulties and problems. This is considered as a serious omission particularly in the context of the anxiety of the Government to secure prompt attention to the difficulties and problems of the weaker sections of the population. Undoubtedly, these matters would come to notice at the lower levels of the Government machinery but for providing immediate redress the normal procedure of these grievances coming through various channels to the level at which redress can be provided is far too circuitous and time taking. If the senior officers who are either in a position to take immediate decision or to secure such decisions promptly were to get first hand knowledge of these problems, the solutions to be provided would be prompt and effective.

2. Government, therefore, desire that, when senior officers undertake tours in different parts of the State, they should set apart, on each tour, two or three hours for meeting the members of the public, take note of their specific grievances and either take steps to redress them on the spot or give consideration at the headquarters immediately on return from their tours. This approach will also enable them to determine whether the existing departmental procedures are causing delay or harassment to the public and to what extent they should be simplified.

3. Government also desire that each Secretary, heads of Department and Collector should set apart each week one forenoon for meeting freely the members of the public as well as their own Class III and Class IV staff to enable them to present their difficulties and problems. They should thereafter ensure that the specific grievances are attended to immediately and redress, if possible, provided without any loss of time.

4. For the purpose of processing these matters, each Department should have a Grievances Cell in direct charge of an Officer not below the rank of a Deputy Secretary in the Secretariat, a Deputy Director in the offices of Head of Departments and a Deputy Collector in a district who should function directly under the Secretary or the Head of Department or the Collector as the case may be. The Secretary, the Head of Department, the Collector should get regularly a fortnightly progress report from this officer indicating the action taken on the various grievances and take serious note of delays in looking into these matters constructively and with understanding and sympathy.

5. It is also suggested that wide and adequate publicity should be given to this new procedure to be followed, day and time set apart for the purpose clearly indicated and deviations strictly avoided unless under very special or emergent circumstances. It will be desirable if all the Secretaries, Heads of Departments and Collectors set apart each Wednesday from 10 A. M. to 1. P. M. (or 7 A. M. to 10 A. M. where morning office hours are observed) for this purpose and all concerned should ensure that no official meetings are arranged on Wednesday forenoon. If for any reason on any particular occasion, it is not possible for an officer to adhere to this program, he should fix another day in advance and notify that day and time so as not to cause any inconvenience to the public.

6. I am also to make it clear that Government do not propose to entertain proposals for any extra staff for this purpose and the Grievance Cell should be constituted from within the existing personnel of the Department/ Office. The Officer and staff to be earmarked for this purpose should, however, be carefully chosen so that the object of securing prompt and effective solutions to the problems of the people is not defeated by rigid, unsympathetic or unimaginative approach.

7. I am also to request that a report may please be sent to the undersigned at the end of each month briefly indicating the action taken in pursuance of this circular, highlighting the important grievances brought to notice and the remedial action taken. These assessment reports may be personally attended to by Secretaries, Heads of Departments and Collectors and not allowed to become a routine matter.

8. The receipt of this letter may please be acknowledged immediately.

J. A. DAVE
Chief Secretary, Orissa