Lateral Entry in Civil Services

1) Introduction
   • There has been much sound about the need for induction of talent from outside into senior positions in the Government of India at the level of joint secretary and above.
   • Department of Personnel & Training (DoPT) has been asked to prepare a proposition on lateral entries into civil services that deal with economy and infrastructure.

2) Arguments in favour of Lateral Entry
   • The 21st century economy needs specialized skills and knowledge for policy-making and administration. The first ARC had pointed out the need for specialization
   • The present system of ‘frequent and arbitrary transfers’ hinder gaining of the relevant experience by incumbent officers
   • Domain experts have been brought from outside the services to head various committees and organizations like Nandan Nilekani, Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Vijay Kelkar, Arvind Subramanian and Raghuram Rajan
   • Both the Niti Aayog and the Planning Commission had allowed for lateral entry. Jharkhand is also experimenting with it as well.
   • There is shortfall of IAS cadre officers. The Baswan Committee (2016) has shown that Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan have a deficit of 75 to 100 officers and their unwillingness to sponsor officers to Centre on deputation
   • There is a need for a shift from the uniformity of centrally planned economic policy to the diverse demands of competitive federalism. Thus there is need to make way for talent pool outside the government.
   • Outside talent from the private sector is more likely to be target - oriented, which will improve the performance of the government.
   • Lateral entry has been adopted by Australia, Belgium, New Zealand, the UK, the Netherlands and the US.
   • When civil servants are made to compete with outside talent, the lethargic attitude will diminish and induce competition within the system.
   • More competition will encourage career civil servants to develop expertise.

3) Recommendations
   • In 2005, the second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC) recommended lateral entry at both the Central and state levels.
   • Surinder Nath Committee in 2003 and Hota Committee in 2004.
   • The ARC recommended a paradigm shift from a career-based to a post-based approach to senior government jobs.
   • The ARC highlights that performance appraisals may be adopted from the armed forces, which could aid in weeding out non-performers.
   • In the armed forces, only 3 per cent of officers make it to the grade of brigadier and above — and promotions are based entirely on merit, which fuels excellence.
4) **Arguments against Lateral Entry**
- The width and depth of field experience which the civil services provide is not available with outside talent.
- External talent cannot bridge the gap between policymaking and ground level implementation than the career civil servants.
- Private sector who ran Air India, Indian Airlines and Vayudoot proved to be failures.
- Performance is vitally influenced by the enabling environment and the best managerial capability cannot deliver results in an adverse operating environment.
- Interests and motivation vary from person to person. Therefore, short term entry of officers through lateral entry might lead to corrupt practices.
- Large-scale lateral induction would amount to a vote of no-confidence in the government personnel management system.
- The best talent can be attracted only if there is reasonable assurance of reaching top level managerial positions.

5) **Challenges**
- It is difficult to assess the performance of a secretary to the government due to complex nature of the job. So it would be difficult to measure the performance of lateral entrants.
- Discretion on lateral entry may pave the way to charges of being “politically motivated”, which may degrade the system.

6) **Way Forward**
- A good managerial system encourages and nurtures talent from within instead of seeking to induct leadership from outside.
- The remedy lies not through lateral induction but through more rigorous performance appraisal and improved personnel management.
- India’s civil services need reform like insulation from political pressure and career paths linked to specialization
- The government can consider lateral entry to head certain pre-identified mission-mode projects and public-sector entities where private-sector expertise actually matters. It should be a mix up of both private sector and civil servants.
- A credible statutory agency like UPSC or an autonomous agency like the Bank Board Bureau, established to hire heads of public-sector banks, should be entrusted with the responsibility of recruitment.
- Liberalised norms that allow civil servants to work outside government with multilateral agencies, nonprofits and corporations for short periods so that they get exposure to market practices and fresh ideas.