

## **UPSC Civil services aspirants to be spared two additional papers**

A panel set up by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) is set to reject demands to reintroduce additional papers in the Civil Services Examination for candidates aspiring to join the IAS and the IFS.

The panel headed by former education secretary BS Baswan – set up by public service recruiter last year for another overhaul of the examination – is slated to give its report by mid-August.

Officers from the two services – Indian Administrative Service and Indian Foreign Service – had demanded that the UPSC either hold a separate exam for the two services or at least get aspirants to write the additional papers to qualify.

Apart from looking at the syllabus and pattern of the exam, the commission also asked the panel if it should continue recruiting candidates for 24 diverse services – ranging from the IAS to the Indian Railway Personnel Service – from the same civil services examination.

Over four lakh graduates appear for the examination every year that offers fewer than one in four hundred a chance of success. The 1,000 candidates who clear the three-stage examination are recruited to any of the 24 civil services depending on their performance.

But it is the IAS that is the hot favourite.

More than 90% of all successful candidates list the administrative service as their first choice. Only about 180 get it.

The rest have to settle for anything ranging from the Indian Police Service and the Indian Revenue Service (Income Tax) to the Indian Information Service and the Indian Audit & Accounts Service.

A senior government official said the committee has not found any reason to tinker with the unified civil services examination and make candidates write extra papers for the IAS.

From 1951 to 1979, aspirants hoping to get into the IAS or IFS had to write three optional papers – unlike two for aspirants for other services – and then, two more

additional papers. The optional papers were of the graduate level but the syllabus of the two additional papers was of postgraduate level.

It was these extra papers for the IAS and IFS that formed the basis for placing the two services on a higher pedestal.

But this pattern ended in 1979 on the recommendations of the DS Kothari committee that sought to end the hierarchy among civil services. The government implemented this recommendation but could never really withdraw the special treatment that the two services got.

As the chorus for parity between IAS and non-IAS civil services became louder last year, the IAS and IFS backed the proposal to reintroduce the additional papers that would set them apart from other civil services.

But for non-IAS officers that have just lost the battle for parity, this could be just nothing more than a consolation prize.

The Seventh Central Pay Commission recommended parity between IAS and non-IAS officers but the government – acting on the advice of the influential IAS officers – shoved the recommendation into the deep freezer.

The government said it did not take a call since there was no unanimity on the recommendation of the three-member panel. One of the three, Vivek Rae, gave his dissent note, arguing against diluting the IAS' status. Rae is a retired IAS officer.