

File & Records Management in the Secretariat :
A Case Study of the M/o. Commerce, Disaster
Management & Relief

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CHAPTER - I

Introduction :

Ours is an administration predominantly file based & file oriented. Almost all organisations public or private use files & records extensively for transaction of official business. Efficiency and effectiveness of such organisations largely depend on the proper & efficient use of files & records and their preservation & destruction. Organisational development and goals can be achieved substantially through proper & systematic management of files & records.

1.2 It is an established fact that all organisations, offices & ministries irrespective of their types & nature of work devote most of their time, energy & resources to the tasks of decision making, decision communicating and implementing. In fact, almost all official business are transacted by taking decisions. Decision making is thus the central theme of our administration and management.

1.3 It is the file in which most of such decisions are taken and through which it is communicated & implemented. If decision making, decision communicating and implementing are considered as the most vital & crucial aspects of administration, then the papers on which decisions are recorded and through which these are communicated and implemented may also be regarded as the most valuable documents an organisation can ever possess. So, the task of file & records management should occupy a position no less important than any other business of an office which remains busy in making, communicating & implementing decisions. The ministries and divisions are perhaps the best examples of such organisations in the country.

1.4 Decision making is always a complex process. It requires a lot of information of the past & present. In the modern world, the value & necessity of information in the affairs of administration & development can not be over exaggerated.

1.5 Information is now power and key to success for any type of organisation. In respect of decision making, relevant information & supportive papers, documents, rules, regulations, laws, standing orders & correspondence are all very vital matters. These are placed in a file for information, observation & perusal at the time of decision making.

2. Description of a file

A file consists of two parts - noting & correspondence parts. The former comprises of note sheets in which the papers under consideration are put up & processed on the basis of the provisions of concerned rules, regulations, laws etc., which remain placed on the correspondence side of the file. "Filing is defined as the process of classifying, arranging and storing records, so that they will be obtainable quickly when needed"¹. Files are opened up for disposal of a case(s) either received from outside or initiated from inside of an organisation through note writing. It is performed by the officer in-charge of a section who, at the end of the analysis of the case, incorporates into it a suggestion which is sought to be approved by his superiors. The superior authority goes through the notes, concerned papers & may or may not approve the suggestions of the

1. H. Webster Johnson and William G. Savage : Administrative Office Management, Ontario : Addison - Wesley Publishing Company, 1986. P.348.

initiating officer. He may also give his own decision on the matter. Whatever may be the case, after his signature, the files move downwards and come back to the initiating section from where the decision is communicated by issuing letters. If the decision is meant for the organisation itself, its subsequent implementing actions are also recorded on the note sheet.

3. Description of Records

File keeping & records management are inseparable. Descriptions about a file have been provided in the above discussions. When a file is disposed of and no other action remains pending there, it turns to become a set of records. "Recording means the process of closing a file after action on all the issues considered thereon has been completed.² Records comprise of those papers & documents which have various information value and which may be used for manifold purposes at the present and in the future activities. Rules, regulations, laws, statements, standing orders, important correspondence, notes, statistical data-sheets, copies of treaties and pacts are all valuable & permanent records. These are maintained and kept in files and then placed in the store/record room for making them available at the time of future need & consultation when occasion arises.

4. Importance of File & Records Management

From above discussions, it is evident that files & records are very powerful and effective means of decision making, decision communicating and implementing mechanism. It serves various purposes

2. Establishment Ministry, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Secretariat Instructions, 1976, P.20.

as a store - house of information. It may be regarded as the eyes, ears & hearts of an organisation as well as of a nation. For, most of the historical, political and economic records are preserved in files and used as sources of information to construct future history of a nation besides being used in various decision making purposes. So, records have not only decision making importance but it has historical, political & economic significance as well. "The better the filing & record keeping system in an organisation, the more efficient will be the working of the organisation".³ So, file & records management should be given a priority which it deserves from all such considerations.

5. Objectives of the study :

The objectives of the study are following :

- i) To evaluate filing & record keeping performance in the selected ministries and
- ii) To suggest improvements in file & records management.

6. Methodology, Data Collection & Analysis:

The research has been conducted through the following activities :

- (a) Survey of opinions
- (b) Examination of filing, record keeping and record destruction system & the performance of the ministry in these respects.

Opinions have been gathered from the following categories of respondents drawn from the selected ministries :

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3. Ministry of Establishment, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Report of the Public Administration Efficiency Study, Vol.2, Dhaka, November 1989, P.46.

- i) Sr. Assistant Secretaries
- ii) Assistant Secretaries
- iii) Section Assistants.

The following two ministries selected on the basis of random sampling have been included in the study :

- 1) Ministry of Commerce
- 2) Ministry of Disaster Management & Relief.

6.1 The officers mentioned above have been interviewed with the questionnaires designed for this purpose. Besides, the files & records of 10 sections were examined to determine whether these were properly opened & maintained; whether records were classified, consigned & destructed as per the provisions of the Secretariat Instructions 1976.

6.2 Collected data, opinions & information were tabulated and analysed through different statistical techniques suitable for the work.

7. Scope & limitations :

7.1 The work as has been already pointed out was confined to the survey of opinions and evaluation of performance in respect of filing & record keeping of two (2) selected ministries in view of time & resource constraints. Files and records management of the ministries of (1) Commerce and (2) Disaster Management & Relief has been taken up under the purview of this study. Two hundred files-one hundred from each ministry selected on random basis from 10 sections, 5 from each ministry, were examined in this connection. Besides, opinions regarding various aspects of records management and record keeping and

suggestions for simplification & modernization of the existing system were also collected from 20 officials, 10 from each ministry, most of whom are Asstt. Secretaries & Senior Asstt. Secretaries in charge of the sections.

7.2 Due to time and resource constraints, the scope of the study was kept limited to two ministries of Bangladesh Secretariat. Besides, indepth study of the issue could not be carried out because of these problems.

CHAPTER - II

1. FINDINGS

Most of the files (85%) examined were opened for disposal of fresh receipts and the remaining 15% files were initiated from the sections either at the instructions of senior officials or on the basis of notes given by them (Table 1.1). So, majority of the files were, in fact, created for disposal of cases and solving problems that contain in the various kinds of correspondence received from outside offices/organisations which have linkages with the ministries for various purposes.

1.2 File numbering, indexing, writing file headings and making entry of these informations into File Register and Detailed Index of Current Files (DIC) are all pre-requisites for opening of files. If these are not properly done, a lot of problems crop up at a later stage. But it appears from table 1.1 that 55% files did not possess proper numbering while 45% did possess the same. Of the files examined, the file number of 20% files were not entered into File Register and 25% files were not entered into the DIC files. The lack of entry of file numbers & other informations into these registers goes against established norms & procedures & can create problems for keeping proper accounts of files and locating them at the time of need.

1.3 The ministries generally use printed file covers for the sake of convenience. Of the files reviewed, 87.50% files had printed covers while 12.50% lacked it. But 51.40% file covers did not have all the printed columns properly filled-in. Some of these columns remained vacant while some other columns contained incorrect informations (Table 1.1).

1.4 Opening of files unnecessarily is greatly discouraged. After evaluating this aspect, it was found that opening of 80% files was out of necessity while 20% were unnecessarily opened. The cases these files could be disposed of otherwise without opening files. This could save time, ensure speedy disposal of cases and keep the numbers of files at its minimum (Table 1.1) in the section.

1.5 The Secretariat Instructions 1976 clearly indicated that when both correspondence & notesheet portion of a file exceeds one hundred page, a new file should be opened in its place. It also provides for keeping routine issues, receipts, notes in a separate cover in stitched condition especially when notes & correspondence portions become bulky. That these instructions are not observed in most cases is apparent from the fact that 62.50% files had no separate covers to accommodate routine issues, receipts & notes and though 25% files had become bulky, the bulky portion had no been stitched & marked part I for the sake of convenience of handling & movement of files (Table 1.1). Some of these files, it was noticed, were made undesirably bulky which could be avoided very easily by placing routine issues & receipts, booklets etc., in a separate cover.

2. Files Headings

As per rule 39 of the Secretariat Instructions 1976 every file is to be provided with a heading or tittle which is supposed to be brief but "correct & comprehensive statement of the subject matter of the file". Out of 200 files examined in this study, 75% fulfilled this requirement, 70% met the criteria of being correct & comprehensive file headings (Table 1.2). In the same rule (39), it is stated that

the file number should have a catch-word which should be "the most significant word" chosen from the file heading.

2.2 Rule 30 of the Secretariat Instruction also provided detailed descriptions and the methods for selecting catch-words itemwise & sub-subjectwise. Different catch-words are grouped alphabetically & numerically for the convenience of dealing with a variety of subjects in a large number of files which are needed to be maintained in a section. But out of 200 files, only 20% were found to have correct and appropriate catch-words while 80% files did not have any such catch-word whatsoever (Table 1.2). In fact, catch-word system for indexing files seems to be unknown to the Assistants responsible for opening files. At the time of interview with them, it was revealed that they were not even acquainted with the system of selecting catch-words and the practice of using them at the time of indexing files.

2.3 "Different catch-words under the same alphabetical group are distinguished by adding numerals before each alphabet as under :

1A - Accounts	1B - Bills
2A - Acts	2B - Books
3A - Advances	3B - Budget
4A - Allowances	4B - Building

and so on. These are called index numbers" (Rule 39). There may be a large number of subjects under each index number which may be "arranged serially & chronologically by putting serial numbers as under :

1A - 1 Accounts of the Dhaka District Board
1A - 2 Accounts of the Bangladesh Govt. Press
1A - 3 Accounts of the Bangladesh railway".

2.4 None of the files examined had this sort-index number and serial number which are needed to deal with large number of subjects. These files had only file numbers, the name of the sections and the mention of the calender year in which it was opened. Even file number was found accurate in respect of only 45% files while in 55% files it was inaccurate (Table 1.2). The old undisposed files of a year which are brought forward to the File Index Register of the next year are required to be given new serial numbers but in practice this is not done in most cases . 30% of such files were given new serial number while 60% files remained under operation without new serial numbers (Table-1.2). The Public Efficiency Study stated that when a lot of note sheets & correspondence are kept together and not removed the file expands vertically creating inconvenience for its easy handling & use.⁴ Some such very old & bulky files were found in the sections which were not replaced but are currently used.

2.5 As has been already pointed and that files are the most important documents with which the sections work each & every moment for disposal of cases by taking decisions in it. Many respondents (60%) confront with various problems at the time of opening files while they work in their desks, while 60% respondents did not face any such problem (Table 2.1). Some of the problems faced by the respondents at the time of opening files are, (i) non-availability of file covers and (ii) first page of note sheets. Besides, opening of file takes a lot of time because it involves a complex procedure of indexing, file numbering and entering file numbers and headings into different registers. It turns to become all the more problematic due

4. Ibid - P.46.

to lack of practical training, skill & experience of those who are connected with the task of initiating files (Table-2.1 & 2.2). In this connection; the Public Efficiency Study reported that the system of "filing & indexing is based on subjective classification of files", the application of which is labour intensive and too much dependent upon the efficiency & skill of the lower staff.⁵

3. Note sheets

3.1 The first pages of the note sheets generally have printed columns which are filled in by the Asisstants at the time of opening files. Name of the ministry/division, section, file number etc., are generally entered in these columns to avoid chances of missing of the note-sheets from the file. Only 25% files had the first page of the note sheets printed whereas in case 75% files, the first page of the note sheets was not printed. The columns of the printed note sheets are not also properly filled in case of 40% files (Table 1.3). The note sheets are very important papers which are used for various purposes in future. So, it should be preserved with all care. But note sheets of 25% files were found shabby & mutalated (Table 1.3). In many cases, the top left hand corners of the note sheets were torn and as such kept untagged. However, note-sheets of 60% files were properly punched & tagged while in case of 40% files, these were not done properly (Table 1.3) .

5. Ibid, P.46.

4. Correspondence part

4.1 A file consists of two parts, viz., note sheets & correspondence. Discussions have already been made about the note sheets-how it is maintained and used in the file. Correspondence portion of the file contains receipts of various kinds including letters with their annexures, copies of booklets, circulars, rules, regulations etc., which are kept punched & tagged after properly numbered from the bottom. Each page of the correspondence is required to be mnumbered by pencil at the top right hand corner. This practice was followed in case of only 22.50% files while in case of other 77.50% files it was not followed (Table 1.4). Sometimes, the page numebr was given by ball-point pen and sometimes by red or blue drawing pencil. Sometimes, it was done at the middle of the pages. However, page numbering was correctly done in respect of 87.50% files (Table 1.4).

4.2 Flag slips are generally used to indicate a particualr page of the correspondence part which is considered necessary to peruse in connection with the disposal of a case. Such flag slips need be removed when action in a particular case is finished. Non-observance of this practice was rampant (55%) & only in case of 20% files it was observed (Table 1.4). Papers in the correspondence parts were, however, properly tagged & punched in most cases (67,50%].

5. File Keeping Arrangement

5.1 Each and every section of the ministry has to deal with innumerable files of this or that kind for transaction of its business. Necessary arrangements are, therefore, required to be made

for preservation and ensuring safe custody of these files. This is generally done by the logistic support of almirahs, file cabinets, racks & shelves. But availability of such logistics are too inadequate compared to their needs. No section is equipped with the sanctioned number of almirahs, file cabinets, racks and shelves. It is evident from the data of table No.1.5 . In most of the sections, the availability of file cabinets & racks is one-third of the sanctioned number while it is less than that in respect of shelves (Table 1.5). The supply position of almirahs was more or less the same. This situation demonstrates the existence of poor and inadequate arrangements made for safe custody & preservation of files and papers in the ministries. In the absence of good arrangements for preservation & ensuring safe custody of files, no one will wonder if files are kept haphazardly hither & thither and lost for want of sufficient care. However, 55% of the respondents opined that they did not experience any difficulty in preserving files while 45% experienced difficulties in this respect (Table 2.3). In their opinions, inadequacy of almirahs/file cabinets and space figure prominent (Table 2.4) in file keeping arrangement. Besides these, lack of practical training and experiences on the part of dealing Assistants in the matter of preservation of files subject wise & class wise stand as a great barrier on the way of doing this work efficiently.

6. Maintenance of Registers

6.1 The Secretariat Instructions 1976 delineated about the needs of different kinds of registers to be maintained by the sections for recording various kinds of information with regard to file & records management. Of these, the (i) section Diary Register (ii) Current

Index Register of Files (DIC), (iii) File Movement Register, (iv) File Register, (v) Issue Register, (vi) Press Register, (vii) Stamp Register, (viii) File Destruction Register, (ix) Inspection Register and (x) Register for Registers deserve mention for their importance and necessity in this connection. In all the 10 sections under review, registers mentioned at sl.Nos. i,ii,iii,iv & v. above were available where as registers of sl. nos. vi, ix & x , table slips, index slips and form for disposal of files were not available at all (Table 1.6). These are not maintained by these sections and they could not provide any satisfactory explanation for this. For smooth and efficient file & records management these are essentially necessary and the non-maintenance of which is bound to create a chaotic situation in the sections.

7. Classification of Records

7.1 The most important aspect of records management which is utterly neglected in total disregard to the Secretariat Instructions is the classification of records into ABCD categories. the work is to be done in the month of January each year after observing all necessary formalities outlined in the Rules 88 to 91 of the Secretariat Instructions 1976. But this work was not done since independence. It seems that it has become no body's business & concern. The Deputy Secretary in-charge of the Central Record Room of Bangladesh Secretariat stated verbally that no ministry/division performs the work of classification of records for a long time and as such the consignment of A & B category records into the Central Record Room and the destruction & weeding of C&D category records which are required to be done at the beginning of each calendar year do not arise at all.

7.2 Corroborative evidence of this statement is available in the findings of the Report of the Public Administrative Efficiency Study conducted by two consulting firms in the year 1989. The said report stated that "At present consignment of 'A' & 'B' category files into the Record Room is seldom done because of the lengthy & cumbersome recording procedure".⁶ The report further stated that "old files are piled up year after year and are destroyed indiscriminately upon the orders of the higher authorities".⁷

7.3 When asked as to why classification of records is not done, 60% respondents of the study remarked that the existing procedures for doing this work are cumbersome & difficult while 40% did not think so and said that it was not difficult & cumbersome (Table 2.5). According to the opinion of the former group of respondents classification of records involves a huge paper work & takes a lot of time to complete all necessary formalities. (Table 2.6). It is, therefore, a lengthy and time-consuming process.

7.4 Rule 87 of the Secretariat Instructions 1976 provides descriptions about A B C D category records which are permanent, semi-permanent, ordinary & routine records respectively. Each category records has its own characteristics features which differentiate one from the other. Rule 88 of the said Instructions stated that when all actions on a file have been completed, the Section Officer (now an Assistant Secretary) will mark that file 'Record' and classify it into one of the four categories mentioned above and pass it on to the Section Assistant for actions outlined in rules 88 to 94. In recording A category files the following procedures are to be observed :

6. Ibid, P.48.

7. Ibid, P.46.

- i) Listing of letters in chronological orders
- ii) Placing the letters chronologically
- iii) Keeping correspondence above the notes
- iv) Editing notes & correspondence to exclude all matters which do not form part of permanent record (Rule 89).

7.5 In respect of B or C category records, above procedures excepting the last one have to be observed also (Rule 90). When the above mentioned paper work is finished the Section Assistant will then proceed to do the following work :

- i) He will note the 'classification' in the relevant column ;
- ii) Check that all papers are complete ;
- iii) Replace the file cover if it is mutilated;
- iv) Note numbers of connected file or previous references on the cover of the file being recorded and also on the covers of file under reference ;
- v) Note the serial number of the file on the relevant page of the Register of Files Due for Destruction ;
- vi) In case of A & B category files, prepare an abstract of the case giving as concisely as possible the purport of the correspondence carried on in the file and paste the same (either printed or typed) on the file cover ;
- vii) Index slips showing the subject heading of the file. Separate slips will be prepared for each keyword in the subject heading and passed on to the R & I Unit to be placed alphabetically in a loose leaf binder for printing of the index at the end of the year ;
- viii) Certify on the File Disposal Form that all orders that are necessary for its disposal have been passed and that the record room papers have been returned to the record room or kept for future reference ; and
- ix) Stamp the file "Recorded" or "Recorded and Indexed" as the case may be. xx

7.6 To do all these work, the Section Assistant and Assistant Secretary must have enough time, experience and tenacity. But it has already been mentioned that classification of records has not been done for a long time.

xx See Rules 90 and 91 of the Secretariat Instructions 19

7.7 Is it due to the system which is absolutely responsible for this sort inactivity? Or is it due to the negligence or incompetence that this work is not undertaken by the Sections? Or is it deemed to be an unnecessary work for which it is not accomplished? These are the questions that need to be answered to find out the real cause of this situation.

7.8 Let us see what do the respondents say about the nature of the work. Of the total respondents, 50% recommended for simplification of classification procedures while the rest 50% stated that no simplification of the existing procedures was necessary. From these observations, one thing has become clear that classification of records is not totally an impossible task. It can be done following the existing procedures if it is taken up in right earnest. Those who advocated for simplification, suggested that the government should form a committee for recommending appropriate measures for simplification of the procedures. Besides, they suggested to reduce the categories of records from 4 to 3, train up the concerned personnel to gather skill & experience to do the job and introduce computer for preservation & retrieval of information (Table 2.8). It thus appears that the work may be made simpler & easier but there is no valid reason to defer the work on these grounds.

8. Consignment Procedures & achievement

8.1 The consignment procedures of A&B category records into the Central Record Room are, in the opinion of 75% respondents, ^{are} cumbersome & outdated but 25% respondents contradicted this statement (Table 2.9). Most of the respondents of the former group stated that the consignment procedures are lengthy as it involves a huge paper &

printing work. They also admitted that classification of A&B category records is not implemented in January each year and hence they stressed upon the need of following the time limit (Table 2.10). In actuality, the question of consignment arises only when the records are classified into the prescribed categories. As this work is left unfinished, procedures for consignment of records whether simple or complex have no role to play. If the relevant Rules 88 to 93 of the Secretariat Instructions are analysed it will appear clear that a lot of clerical & printing work is involved in the matters of both classification & consignment of A&B category records. If urgency is felt, importance is laid, necessary pressure is given and logistics provided, there is no valid reason to believe that the work will remain suspended due to its procedural complexities. If something of the existing system can make the work impossible, it is apprehended, nothing can make it possible. Because, that 'something', will always remain there in any system improved or modern in whatever form it appears for operation.

9. Destruction of files

9.1 Another important aspect of records management is destruction and weeding of C&D category records which is also required to be done in the month of January each year by the concerned section. But this vital work is not performed in the absence of classification of records. One half of the respondents commented that there are problems for this work where as in the opinion of other half there is no such problem (Table 2.11). Those who identify problems for destruction & weeding of C&D category records, first of all, said that as records are not classified at all, there arises no necessity of destructing

them. Some of them (40%) stated that time available for this work is not enough and some 30% remarked that record destruction by burning is outdated & hazardous. Some 20% of such respondents made a very revealing comment by saying that none is interested in this work.

9.2 However, 75% of total respondent opted for simplification & modernization of the destruction procedures. Of them 66% recommended for introduction of paper shredding machines for destruction of records and 73% urged for strict adherence to the existing procedures in this respect and 40% felt the need for deploying a whole time Assistant for undertaking this work. (Table 2.14). It is apparent from the above analysis of the opinions offered by the respondents that the crux of the problem lies elsewhere. If the records are classified each year and the records due for destruction are made available and strictness is observed for doing the work there is no plausible reason to leave the work untouched on the plea of complex procedures for destruction.

9.3 From the entire course of above discussion, it is evident that there is a felt need for simplification & modernization of filing & record keeping system which is further strengthened by the fact that 80% respondents, advocated for these reforms & changes (Table 2.12). Of these respondents about 69%, suggested to keep the number of current files at its minimum, 75% recommended for introducing computerized filing system and 32% for introducing micro-filming & micro-fitchi for preservation of needed records and 63% emphasised the need for using computers for sorting out obsolete files (Table 2.16). To implement all these suggestions & recommendations, 62% respondent felt the need for installation of computers in the sections and 75% urged upon training of computer for the dealing Assistants.

10. Inspection

10.1 Rule 201 of the Secretarial Instructions 1976 clearly indicated that the Deputy Secretaries will inspect the working of the sections under their charge once every six month and Rule 202 provides that a Section Officer (Now an Asstt. Secretary) will inspect his section once in a month.

10.2 Most of the respondents (65%) stated that the Deputy Secretaries did not inspect their sections at all while the remaining respondents (35%) said that the Deputy Secretaries had inspected their sections once or on more than two occasions in a year. Of these 35% respondents, majority (57%) observed that at the time of inspection the Deputy Secretaries had looked after files & records management of the section while the remaining 43% respondents remarked that they (D/S) had never taken interest in seeing files & records management aspects of the sections inspected.

10.3 During such inspections, the Deputy Secretaries left suggestions for keeping files subjectwise, numberwise and limited as far as possible. They also stressed on the need for observing the existing procedures for opening files and put up all fresh receipts due for considerations within minimum time. But they never said anything about classification, assignment & destruction of records.

11. File & Records Management through Computer

11.1 There is enough scope and prospects for improvement on the existing file keeping & records management in the ministries through the introduction of modern technology and management information

system but it will require enough time resources & skilled manpower to introduce & implement such innovative & modern methods.

11.2 In the opinion of the senior system analyst, M/o. Establishment, there is easy and economical way to file & find information with the application of electronic machines - the computers. The desktop electronic filing system is in vogue in many parts of the developed world. These machines can put away and alleviate all perplexing paper handling distress. They can offer a multifaceted and efficient way of filing all sorts of documents faster & simpler with their amazing features. Some of these machines and all-in-one unit for paper input and data output with a built-in scanner, simple storage retrieval system and automatic processing ability. They can transfer documents into electronic files very quickly, store a huge numebr of pages in a small disk. Designed for easy operation the machine uses simple commands. Even an untrained operator can locate & print data without delay. The machines are also computer compatible for networking with the existing system. He also said that there machines have capabilities of meeting all the expectations concerning file management, save greatdeal of space, reduce the chances of making mistakes.

12. Conclusion

12.1 File & records management is a complex and neglected area. It is not given due attention of importance. The instructions laid down in the Secretarial Instructions 1976 in respect of file & records management are hardly observed. Classification, consignment & destruction of records are not done since independence :

in 1971 on the ground that the procedures to be followed to do these work are cumbrous, time-consuming & outdated. But no attempt has yet been made to simplify & modernise the system of file & records management. There is no denying of the fact that file & records management system is complex, cumbrous, time-consuming & too much dependent on the skill of lower staff.

12.2 The present state of affairs relating to file & records management can be improved even under the existing system if due importance & emphasis is laid by the concerned higher authorities on the work and strict orders are passed on those Assistant Secretaries/Sr. Assistant Secretaries & Section Assistants who are responsible for classification, consignment and destruction of records to do the work without any excuse. The entire blame can not be reposed on the procedural aspects of the system which is, of course, cumbrous, out-dated and time-consuming but even in these circumstances the work can be undertaken and finished if the ministries really mean business & want to get the work done. The work can not suffer & remain pending for an indefinite period on the sheer plea that it is complex and cumbrous. The problems should not be exaggerated and work neglected. Who can give hundred percent guarantee that opening of files, classification, consignment & destruction of records etc., will all be accomplished smoothly & efficiently as soon as the existing system is changed, modernised & simplified. The approach to this task should be work oriented instead of system oriented. In any system of work simple or complex, men behind who will implement it and the circumstances in which they will work are very important factors. If the atmosphere is congenial and the system

is simple & modern, the achievement will be more than that achieved in a complex & complicated system. But it does not mean that there will be a complete deadlock of work & no progress will be achieved in a complex & complicated situation as it appears in respect of classification, consignment & destruction of records.

13. Recommendations :

1. Great care should be taken for opening files, providing its headings, numbers, catch-words and entering these informations into the relevant registers in due course.
2. The higher authority should strictly ensure the timely application of the existing procedures with regard to the work of file opening, indexing & numbering; classification, consignment & destruction of records.
3. There is great necessity & enough scope for simplifying & modernising the existing procedures with regard to classification, consignment & destruction of records. *The work in this direction should be undertaken immediately.*
4. A comprehensive study should be undertaken immediately to find out ways & means for introducing a simple but modern file & records management system & examine the feasibility of using computers for storing & retrieving information in the ministries.

Table-1.1

Information About Opening Procedures of File

Statement	Observation (Number)		
	Yes	No	Total
File was opened on the basis of fresh receipt	170 (85.00)	30* (15.00)	200 (100.00)
File number was properly given	90 (45.00)	110 (55.00)	200 (100.00)
File number was entered in the file register	160 (80.00)	40 (20.00)	200 (100.00)
File number was entered in the register of DIC file	150 (75.00)	50 (25.00)	200 (100.00)
File cover was properly printed	175 (87.50)	25 (12.50)	200 (100.00)
All printed columns of the cover page were properly filled-up	85 (48.60)	90 (51.40)	175 (100.00)
Opening of the file was a necessity	160 (80.00)	40** (20.00)	200 (100.00)
Files have part files	-	200 (100.00)	200 (100.00)
Routine issues, receipt or notes could be kept in a separate cover	75 (37.50)	125 (62.50)	200 (100.00)
Notes or correspondence portion of the files have become bulky	50 (25.00)	150 (75.00)	200 (100.00)
Bulky portion had been stiched & marked Part I	-	50 (100.00)	50 (100.00)

* These 30 (Thirty) files were opened on the basis of notes/instruction.

** It was observed that 100% of the letters of these files (40) could be disposed of otherwise.

N.B. : Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage

Table-1.2

Information About File Heading, Catch-word, Index-number etc.

Statement	Observation			
	Yes	No	N/A*	Total
File headings were brief	150 (75.00)	50 (25.00)	-	200 (100.00)
File headings were correct & comprehensive	140 (70.00)	60 (30.00)	-	200 (100.00)
Selection of catch-words were proper & correct	40 (20.00)	160 (80.00)	-	200 (100.00)
File numbering was accurate	90 (45.00)	110 (55.00)	-	200 (100.00)
Files of the previous years were given a new serial no. at the beginning of the new year	60 (30.00)	120 (60.00)	20 (10.00)	200 (100.00)

* N/A : Not Appropriate (does not arise at all)

N.B.: Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage

Table-1.3

Information About Note Sheets

Statement	Observation		
	Yes	No	Total
First page of the note sheets was printed	50 (25.00)	150* (75.00)	200 (100.00)
Printed note sheets were properly filled-up	30 (60.00)	20 (40.00)	50 (100.00)
Page numbering was properly done	175 (87.50)	25 (12.50)	200 (100.00)
Note sheets were shabby or mutilated	50 (25.00)	150 (75.00)	200 (100.00)
Note sheets were properly punched & tagged	120 (60.00)	80 (40.00)	200 (100.00)

* One-Third of the non-printed note sheets were properly written.

N.B.: Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage.

Table-1.4

Information About Correspondence Part of Files

Statement	Observation			
	Yes	No	N/A*	Total
Page numbering was done by pencil at the top right hand corner	45 (22.50)	155 (77.50)	-	200 (100.00)
Page numbering was correctly done	175 (87.50)	25 (12.50)	-	200 (100.00)
Flag slips were duly removed	40 (20.00)	110 (55.00)	50 (25.00)	200 (100.00)
Papers were punched & tagged properly	135 (67.50)	65 (32.50)	-	200 (100.00)

* N/A = Not Applicable

N.B. : Figures in The parentheses indicate percentage

Table-1.6

Information About The File and Record Registers of
the 10 Branches/Sections of two Ministries

Registers & Records	Statement of The Records & Registers(%)			
	Available	Not available	Not applicable	Total
Section*Diary Registers	100	-	-	100
Current Index Registers of Files	100	-	-	100
File Registers	100	-	-	100
File Movement Registers	100	-	-	100
Issue Register	100	-	-	100
Press Register	-	100	-	100
Stamp Register	-	-	100	100
File Destruction Register	20	80	-	100
Inspection Register	-	100	-	100
Table Slip	-	100	-	100
Index Slip	-	100	-	100
Guard File	80	20	-	100
Form for disposal of files	-	100	-	100
Register for Register	-	100	-	100

Table-2.1

Opining of the Respondents Regarding problems for Opening Files

N = 20

Opinion	No. of Respondents (%)
Problems appeared	40.00
No problem at all	60.00
Total	100.00

Table-2.2

Statement of the Nature of Problems for Opening Files

N = 8

Problems Mentioned	No. of Respondents (%)
Sometimes file covers are not readily available	12.50
Sometimes first page of note sheet is not available	25.00
It is a complex procedures	25.00
It needs a lot of time	12.00
Index No. can not be used due to lack of practical training and experience	25.00
Since long, file register is not maintained properly	25.00
File cabinet is not available, as a result certain file can not traced out quickly	12.50
Accounts of the part files are not maintained properly due to lack of skill section assistant	12.50
Multiple answers were recorded	

Table-2.3

Opinion of the Respondents Regarding Difficulty for
preservation of Files in the Section

N = 20

Opinion	No. of Respondents (%)
Difficulty experienced	45.00
No difficulty at all	55.00
Total	100.00

Table-2.4

Opinion of the Respondents Regarding Nature of
Difficulty for Preservation of Files in the Section

N = 9

Nature of difficulty	No. of Respondents (%)
Inadequacy of Almirah/File Cabinet	55.55
Poor locking system of Almirah	22.22
Space problem	55.55
Files are not kept properly	11.11
Difficulty to maintain secrecy	22.22
Lack of practical training for preservation of files	11.11

Multiple answers were recorded

Table-2.5

Opinion About the Existing Procedures for
classification of records into ABCD Categories

N = 20

Opinion	No. of Respondents (%)
Existing procedures are cumbersome and difficult	60.00
Not cumbersome & difficult	40.00
Total	100.00

Table-2.6

Causes of difficulties and Cumbersomeness of the
Existing Procedures for Classification of records

N = 12

Causes	No. of Respondents (%)
It is a lengthy and time consuming process	49.98
Paper work involved is huge	25.00
It takes a lot of time to complete all formalities	74.97
Administrative Ministry does not assign any particular officer to do the job; hence it is not being done in due time	8.33

Multiple answers were recorded

Table-2.7

Opinion of the Respondents about Simplification of the
Procedures for Classification of File

N = 20

Opinion	No. of Respondents (%)
Need to be simplified	50.00
No simplification needed	50.00
Total	100.00

Table-2.8

Suggested Measures for Simplification

N = 10

Measures	No. of Respondents (%)
A Committee may be formed by the govt. for suggesting some procedures	30.00
Category should be reduced into 3	10.00
No. of Category may be reduced	20.00
Training is essential for concerned persons	20.00
Computer system may be introduced to save time consuming and to preserve information	20.00
Time limit for preservation & weeding of files should be changed	20.00
Information of A&B Category files may be preserved in micro films, so that information may be preserved files may be destructed afterwords	10.00

Multiple answers were recorded

Table-2.9

Opinion about the Consignment Procedures
of A&B Category records into Record Room

N = 20

Opinion	No. of Respondents (%)
Consignment procedures are cumbersome & outdated	75.00
Not cumbersome and outdated	25.00
Total	100.00

Table-2.10

Suggested measures for simplification and
modernization of consignment procedures

N = 15

Measures	No. of Respondents (%)
Classification of A&B Category records is not done in January each year, hence time limit should be followed	59.94
Consignment process is lengthy	66.60
It involves a huge paper & printing work	59.94
A whole time assigned officer need to be deployed to do the job	33.30
Procedures should be reformed	13.32
Computer/microfilms may be introduced	6.66

Multiple answers were recorded

Table-2.11

Opinion of the Respondents for Weeding and
Destruction C&D Category Records

N = 20

Opinion	No. of Respondents
There are problems for these action	50.00
No. problem at all	50.00
Total	100.00

Table-2.12

The Problems Stated by the Respondents for
Destruction & Weeding C&D Category Records

N = 10

Problems	No. of Respondents (%)
C&D Category files are not classified in January each year and entered into the register due for destruction	80.00
Records are not destructed each year	30.00
Time available is not enough to do this job	40.00
Destruction of records by burning is outdated and hazardous	30.00
None is interested & sincere to do the task	10.00
Concerned Officers do not take interest & try to avoid this work	10.00
Sometimes it is difficult to identify C&D category files	10.00
Someties destructed files are needed	10.00

Multiple answers were recorded.

Table-2.13

Opinion of the Respondents Regarding Simplification
and Modernization of the Procedures for Destruction
C&D Category records

N = 20

Opinion	No. of Respondents (%)
Need to be simplified & modernized	75.00
Simplification & modernization not needed	25.00
Total	100.00

Table-2.14

Suggestions for Improvement of Destruction Procedures of records

N = 15

Suggestion	No. of Respondents (%)
To use paper shredding machines for the destruction of records	66.60
The timely application of the existing procedures should be ensured strictly by the higher authority	73.26
A whole time assistant needs to be engaged	39.96
These should be recycled by calling tender	6.66
Concerned officers should be trained & motivated to do the job properly	6.66
To introduce computer technology to ease the burden of manual filing	6.66

Multiple answers were recorded

Table-2.15

Opinion of the Respondents Regarding Modernization and Simplification of Filing and Record Keeping System for the Sake of Better Office Management & Preservation of Records

N = 20

Opinion	No. of Respondents (%)
Need to be simplified and modernized	80.00
The present system is correct & may be continued	20.00
Total	100.00

Table-2.16

Suggestions for Improvement of Files & Records Keeping System

N = 16

Suggestion	No. of Respondents (%)
Opening of files should be kept at its minimum	68.75
Computerized filing system should be introduced	75.00
Introduction of micro-filming for preservation of needed records	31.25
Use of computer for sorting out obsolete files	62.50
Unnecessary opening of file should be avoided	6.25

Multiple answers were recorded

Table-2.17

Measures for Implementing suggestions by the Respondents

N = 16

Measures	No. of Respondents (%)
Installation of Computer in each Ministry/Division	62.50
Training of concerned personnel to use computer	75.00
Officer in charge of a section and office Assistants are required to be trained properly on overall maintenance of filing system	6.25
Micro Film system should be introduced in every Ministry	6.25

Multiple answers were recorded

Table-2.18

Statement about the yearly Inspection of the section by Deputy Secretary of the section

N = 20

Inspected	No. of Respondents (%)
Once	5.00
Twice	5.00
Thrice	10.00
About ten times	5.00
Several times	10.00
Not at all	65.00
Total	100.00

Table-2.19

Result of the Inspection by Deputy Secretary

N = 7

Result	No. of Respondents (%)
Dy. Secretary had seen files & records management of the section	57.12
Deputy Secretary had never seen files and record management system	42.88
Total	100.00

Table-2.20

Suggestions given by the Deputy Secretaries at the time of Inspection

N = 4

Suggestions	No. of Respondents (%)
File should be kept subject wise	25.00
File should be kept number wise	25.00
To follow existing procedures	25.00
Opening of files be kept limited	25.00
To put up all applications within minimum time	25.00

Multiple answers were recorded

Table-1.5

Information About File Keeping Arrangement Materials/Goods

Ministry of	Section	Arrangement in Number*							
		File Cabinet		Almirahs		Racks		Shelves	
		Sanction	Actual	Sanction	Actual	Sanction	Actual	Sanction	Actual
Commerce	Personnel Administration	3	2	6	4	2	1	2	-
	Commercial Service	4	2	7	4	3	1	2	1
	BCS (Trade) Est. & Training	2	-	5	3	3	1	2	-
	Administration of Directorates	3	1	5	3	3	1	2	-
	Administration of Corporation	3	1	6	4	2	1	2	-
Disaster Management & Relief	ROHINGA	3	1	5	3	2	1	1	-
	Feeding Programme	-	-	5	5	-	-	-	-
	FFWP	2	1	5	3	3	1	2	1
	Test Relief	-	1	-	3	-	1	-	-
	CARE	2	-	1	3	1	0	-	-
Total		22	9	45	35	19	8	13	2
		(100.00)	(40.90)	(100.00)	(77.78)	(100.00)	(42.20)	(100.00)	(15.40)

* Figures in the parentheses indicate percentage